

Report of the panel of the external review of HAC

**Hungarian Accreditation Committee**

May 2013

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the report of the review of HAC undertaken in May 2013 of site visit for the purpose of determining whether the agency meets the criteria for Full membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

### 1.1. Background and outline of the ENQA review process

The Statutes of ENQA require all member agencies to undergo an external cyclical review, at least once every five years, in order to verify that they fulfill the membership provisions.

In November 2004, the General Assembly of ENQA agreed that the third part of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* should be incorporated into the membership provisions of its (then) regulations (now statutes). Substantial compliance with the ESG thus became the principal criterion for membership of ENQA. The ESG were subsequently adopted at the Bergen ministerial meeting of the Bologna Process in 2005.

The third part of the ESG covers the cyclical external review of quality assurance and accreditation agencies.

The external review of HAC was conducted in line with the process described in *Guidelines for external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area*<sup>1</sup> and in accordance with the timeline set out in the *Terms of Reference*<sup>2</sup>. The review panel for the external review of HAC was composed of the following members:

Name	Background of activities
Thierry Malan	Higher Education Consultant, former General Inspector for Administration of National Education and Research, France, Chair
Liliana Duguleană	Professor at the Transilvania University from Braşov, Romania – Secretary
Norma Ryan	Higher Education consultant, former Director of the Quality Promotion Unit, University College Cork – National University of Ireland Cork, Ireland – <i>EUA nomination</i>
Christian Moldt	Managing Advisor at the Danish Evaluation Institute, Denmark
Éva Réka Fazekas	Student at the University of Szeged, member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of HÖÖK, the National Union of Students in Hungary, member of the Quality Assurance Experts' Pool (ESU), Hungary – <i>ESU nomination</i>

Table 1. Panel Members

In addition to fulfilling the periodic external review requirement of ENQA membership, the review of HAC had the following purposes:

- to assess the agency's compliance with the ENQA membership criteria/ESG,
- to offer any additional reflections or development recommendations.

HAC produced a self-evaluation report which provided a substantial portion of the evidence that the panel used to form its conclusions. The panel conducted a site-visit to validate fully the self-evaluation and clarify any points at issue. Finally, the review panel produced the present final report on the basis of the self-evaluation report, site-visit and its findings. In doing so, it provided an opportunity for HAC to comment on the factual accuracy of the draft report. The review panel confirms that it was given access to all documents and people it wished to consult throughout the review.

The Panel wishes to thank the HAC members and staff for their work and welcome as well as all the participants who gave their time and experience for all the meetings organized during the site visit.

### 1.2. Conclusions of the Report concerning the HAC compliance with the ENQA membership criteria/ESG

<sup>1</sup>ENQA: Guideline for external reviews, ([www.enqa.eu/files/Guidelines%20for%20external%20reviews%20of%20quality%20assurance%20agencies%20in%20the%20EHEA.pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/files/Guidelines%20for%20external%20reviews%20of%20quality%20assurance%20agencies%20in%20the%20EHEA.pdf))

<sup>2</sup> ToR, External review of the HAC by the ENQA, Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE (December 2012)

After the site visit the panel secretary and the chair prepared a draft report, which was circulated to the panel members for further discussions and clarifications.

The report produced was based on the SER, the additional documents submitted prior and during the site visit, previous External review ENQA report (2008) and HAC progress report, the HAC annual reports, recommendations of HAC International Advisory Board and other documents, and on the findings of site-visit meetings.

HAC had an opportunity to comment on the report for factual accuracy and the final report was then finalized in full consultation with the entire external review panel, and forwarded to HAC and the ENQA secretariat.

The external review panel draws the following conclusions, presented in Table 2:

ENQA Criterion / ESG Reference		Conclusions of the Panel for:		
	Sub- criterion	ESG Part 2	ENQA Sub-criterion	ENQA Criterion
	ESG 2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures	fc		
	ESG 2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes procedures	fc		
	ESG 2.3 Criteria for decisions procedures	fc		
	ESG 2.4 Processes fit for purpose procedures	fc		
	ESG 2.5 Reporting procedures	fc		
	ESG 2.6 Follow up-procedures	sc		
	ESG 2.7 Periodic reviews	sc		
	ESG 2.8 System-wide analysis	sc		
<b>ENQA sub-criterion/ ESG 3.1: Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education/ Part 2</b>			<b>FC</b>	
<b>ENQA sub-criterion/ ESG 3.3: Activities</b>			<b>FC</b>	
<b>ENQA Criterion 1/ ESG 3.1: ESG 3.3</b>				<b>FC</b>
<b>ENQA Criterion 2/ ESG 3.2: Official status</b>				<b>SC</b>
<b>ENQA Criterion 3/ ESG 3.4: Resources</b>				<b>PC</b>
<b>ENQA Criterion 4/ ESG 3.5: Mission statement</b>				<b>FC</b>
<b>ENQA Criterion 5/ ESG 3.6: Independence</b>				<b>PC</b>
<b>ENQA Criterion 6/ ESG 3.7: External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies</b>				<b>SC</b>
<b>ENQA Criterion 7/ ESG 3.8: Accountability procedures</b>				<b>FC</b>
<b>ENQA Criterion 8: Consistency of judgments, appeals system and contributions to aims of ENQA</b>				<b>FC</b>

FC/fc (fully compliant), SC/sc (substantially compliant), PC/pc (partially compliant), NC/nc (non compliant)

Table 2. Conclusions of the Panel members

According with the *Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation* specified in the *Terms of Reference*<sup>3</sup>, "... the review panel is not expected, however, to make any judgments as regards the reconfirmation of Full Membership".

In section 4, *Compliance with ENQA Criteria/European Standard and Guidelines (ESG)*, each criterion/ESG standard was presented separately, including:

- EVIDENCE: a short description of the gathered evidence,
- ANALYSIS: based on the available evidence, a consideration of the measure in which HAC met the criterion/ESG standard;
- CONCLUSION: judgment on compliance in the panel opinion,
- RECOMMENDATION: if it is the case.

Additional reflections or developmental recommendations of panel members are offered in the section 5 of the report, called *Conclusion and development*.

<sup>3</sup> ToR, External review of the HAC by the ENQA, Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE (December 2012), p.1.

## 2. GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

Abbreviation	
CRE	Conférence des Recteurs Européens (European Rectors' Conference)
EA	Educational Authority
ECA	European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EQA	External Quality Assurance
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESG	Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
HAC	Hungarian Accreditation Committee
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HE	Higher Education
HRC	Hungarian Rectors' Conference
MHR	Ministry of Human Resources
NDC	National Doctoral Council
NUS	National Union of Students, (HÖÖK - Hungarian Language)
QA	Quality Assurance
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
ToR	Terms of Reference
UDS	Union of Doctoral Students (DOSZ - Hungarian Language)

Table 3. Glossary of terms

### 3. INTRODUCTION

#### 3.1. Purposes of the review

HAC was founded by the 1993 Higher Education Law in Hungary. Its first external evaluation by an international review team coordinated by CRE (now EUA) took place in 1999/2000. HAC achieved ENQA Full Membership in 2002.

In September 2008, the second external evaluation reconfirmed ENQA membership of HAC, being a type B review. In October 2010 HAC elaborated the Progress Report on Follow-up measures on the 2008 External Evaluation of the HAC.

This is the third external evaluation and the second undertaken by ENQA, being a type A review, which follows after five years, to provide information to the ENQA Board whether HAC should be reconfirmed as a Full Member of ENQA, according to the European Standards and Guidelines and the criteria for ENQA membership.

#### 3.2. The higher education system in Hungary

“Higher education institutions can be established by the state or by private entities. To become a state recognized higher education institution, the institution must undergo an accreditation procedure. State recognition is necessary for an institution to issue diplomas which are recognized in Hungary. Higher Education institutions enjoy a high level of autonomy both in financial and in professional matters.”<sup>4</sup>

##### 3.2.1. The degree structure of Hungarian higher education system

The degree structure<sup>4</sup> of Hungarian higher education system is presented in Figure 1.

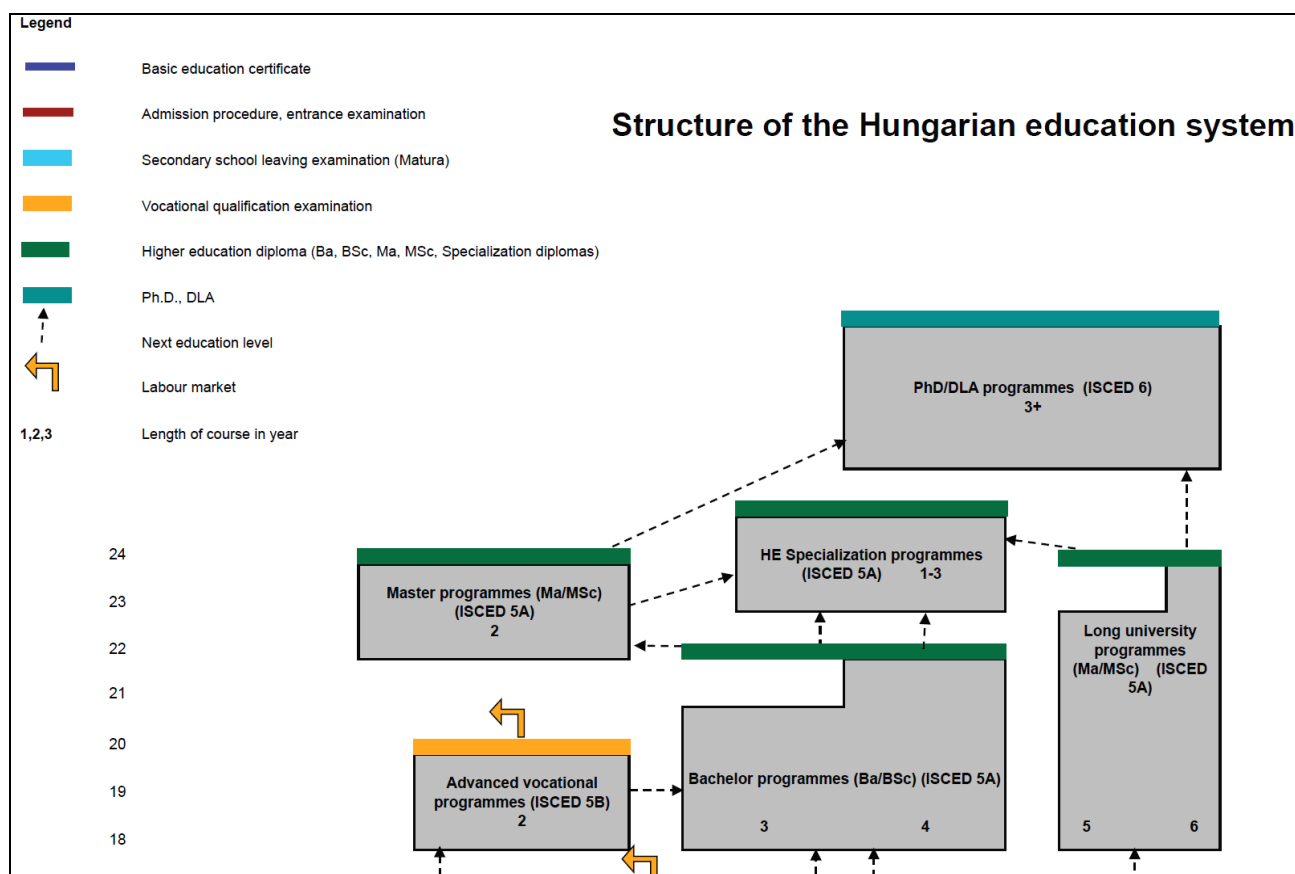


Figure 1. Degree structure of Hungarian higher education system (cutting for HE)

<sup>4</sup> “The System of Education in Hungary”, Ministry of National Resources, Budapest, 2011, 11\_System of Education in Hungary.pdf, annex to SER, p. 9, 10

Within the framework of Bologna system, the BA/BSc programmes have 6 to 8 semesters (ISCED 5A, 180-240 ECTS credits) leading to the first degree; master level programmes (ISCED 5A, 60-120 ECTS credits) have 2 to 4 semesters and require the first degree as admission criterion. Along with the BA-MA system, in some study fields there are undivided long programmes remaining at the standard form of 10 to 12 semesters (ISCED 5A, 300-360 ECTS credits), leading to the first degree, equivalent to the MA/MSc degree.

Short cycle advanced vocational programmes (ISCED 5B, 120 ECTS credits) are relatively new in the Hungarian education system. These programmes can be launched by higher education institutions and provided both by higher education institutions and upper secondary schools. These programmes lead to an advanced vocational qualification included in the National Qualification Register.

Higher education also includes post-graduate specialization programmes at ISCED level 5A. These can be launched by higher education institutions and, in some areas (like banking and fiscal trades) by national authorities.

In order to enter doctoral programmes (ISCED 6) a MA/MSc degree is required.

"Higher education programmes (ISCED 5A, 5B, 6) are offered by universities and colleges (non-university HEIs). ISCED 5B advanced vocational programmes may also be offered by secondary vocational schools. They do not provide a higher education degree but 30-60 of their ECTS credits can be recognized for relevant Bachelor programmes."<sup>5</sup>

"A PhD or DLA (Doctor of Liberal Arts) degree is awarded on completion of the doctoral course, and defending a doctoral thesis. In some cases, students may also apply for a PhD degree award procedure on the basis of an individual study plan, without having accomplished a doctoral course."<sup>6</sup>

### 3.2.2. Organization of higher education in Hungary

The following definitions are available in the Higher Education Act:

"*Faculty* means the organizational unit in charge of the instruction, research, and artistic activities of related degree programmes in one or more fields of study or discipline of science as defined in the educational programme.

a) *University faculty* means an organizational unit where

aa) the number of full-time lecturers is 40 or more

ab) at least half of the full-time lecturers and researchers have a scientific degree, and lecturers with a scientific degree carry out regular research activity

ac) the number of students participating in full-time day-time education is no more than 35 students per full-time lecturer with a scientific degree

ad) at least three of the full-time lecturers and researchers are core members of the university's doctoral school.

b) *College faculty* means an organizational unit where

ba) the number of full-time lecturers is at least 35,

bb) at least one third of full-time lecturers has a scientific degree."<sup>7</sup>

Some colleges are associated with universities and operate as college faculties within universities. A university can also offer college level courses.

The higher education institutions in Hungary can be state-owned or run by churches or legal entities determined by the law. There are two types of higher education institutions: non-university institutions/colleges and universities.

"The Hungarian higher education system consists of two networks of institutions with complementary functions. Universities were established to offer academic programmes and educate professionals with basic research and development skills, while colleges (non-university higher education institutions) were established to offer programmes preparing for practical professions."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "The System of Education in Hungary", Ministry of National Resources, Budapest, 2011, 11\_System of Education in Hungary.pdf, annex to SER, p. 9, 10

<sup>6</sup> "The System of Education in Hungary", Ministry of National Resources, Budapest, 2011, 11\_System of Education in Hungary.pdf, annex to SER, p. 24

<sup>7</sup> Education Act, Ch. XXX, MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS, 66. Definitions, Section 108

<sup>8</sup> "The System of Education in Hungary", Ministry of National Resources, Budapest, 2011, 11\_System of Education in Hungary.pdf, annex to SER, p. 34, 38

Both types of institutions may launch courses in all of the three cycles, but, in order to qualify as a university, an institution has to offer a Master programme in at least two fields of study and PhD programme in at least one study field.<sup>9</sup>

In the academic year 2012-2013, there are 172 accredited doctoral schools in Hungary. Doctoral training constitutes the third cycle within the current Hungarian higher education system. Nowadays there are 67 HEIs listed in the HE Act, from which: 27 universities and 40 colleges.

"Universities, faculties and other organizational units outstanding in the field of science and technology may be awarded the <Research> title upon fulfillment of certain criteria, which will be accompanied by extra state funding."<sup>9</sup>

"In higher education, a general condition of employment is an MA or equivalent degree. The precondition for an indefinite employment contract is a PhD. Full time professors are appointed on the basis of an outstanding academic record."<sup>9</sup>

### **3.2.3. The main directions of development of the higher education system in Hungary**

In Hungary, the number of students tripled in the last 20 years. The dynamics of labor market conducted to a large and wide supply of programmes offered by higher education institutions.<sup>9</sup>

*State funding of higher education institutions* are granted to state and church maintained higher education institutions. The state will guarantee state-funded places annually, equal to 45% of the 18-year old age group of the previous year. Private institutions will be able to offer state-funded places for students only through being granted an order by the state.

The development strategy proposes to reduce the imbalances in geographical accessibility to higher education by increasing the proportion of state funded places provided in the provinces. *Measures for improving equity and effectiveness in higher education* try to smooth the excessive concentration of higher education institutions in Budapest which reduces the access opportunities of young people living in the country side.

According to the Europe 2020 Strategy, the National Reform Programme of Hungary contains measures:

- to increase *the proportion of the young population with a higher education degree* by reducing both the drop-out rate of students and the average graduation time;
- to improve the *foreign language teaching* in public education and specialist language teaching in higher education;
- to review *the multi-cycle structure*, professional (vocationally oriented) and academic programmes will be differentiated more clearly and the supply and proportion of short cycle programmes will be increased.
- to support *the entry on the labor market*, to offer career counseling, career tracking, and the participation of institutions in adult education.

### **3.3. The main functions of the HAC, areas, responsibility and work, including the review methods it uses**

"In Hungary, a new Act on National Higher Education CCIV/2011, was passed by Parliament on December 23, 2011"; "... it went into effect on September 1, 2012."<sup>10</sup>

Some clauses of the Act, pertaining to the Hungarian Accreditation Committee went into effect earlier than 1 September 2012. The government decree on the HAC, titled "*On Specific Issues Regarding Higher Education Quality Evaluation and Development*" (19/2012, II. 22.) was issued on 22 February 2012. The mandate of the existing HAC was shortened to 11 months and a new HAC started to act on 1st March 2012.

"The *central government* sets the legal framework for operating educational institutions, establishes the criteria and conditions for public education, operates the examination system and provides quality control through the Educational Authority."<sup>10</sup>

"The Ministry of National Resources is responsible for establishing general policy, regulatory and control related tasks in line with the provisions of the Act on Higher Education."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> "The System of Education in Hungary", Ministry of National Resources, Budapest, 2011, 11\_System of Education in Hungary.pdf, annex to SER, p. 34, 38

<sup>10</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p.35



At Section 70 (2), in the Higher Education Act it is mentioned that:  
"The Hungarian Accreditation Committee shall ensure that its professional evaluation criteria, the contents of opinions and positions adopted by it, and the identity of participating experts – which information are public data for public interest – are publicly available. The evaluation criteria of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee shall be applicable to the entire Hungarian higher education in a uniform manner, irrespective of the maintainers of such institutions."<sup>11</sup>

The HAC's main activities<sup>12</sup> before the Act on National Higher Education were:

- ex ante accreditation of new higher education institutions;
- ex ante accreditation of new faculties;
- ex ante evaluation of education and outcome requirements of Bachelor programmes;
- ex ante evaluation of education and outcome requirements of Master programmes;
- ex ante accreditation of Bachelor programmes to be launched at an institution;
- ex ante accreditation of Master programmes to be launched at an institution;
- ex ante accreditation of new doctoral schools at universities;
- ex ante evaluation of applications for professorial positions by institutions;
- cyclical ex post accreditation of institutions;
- cyclical ex post accreditation of degree programmes and doctoral schools.

In the context of the New Higher Education Law, the HAC main activities<sup>13</sup> are:

- ex ante evaluation of new higher education institutions;
- ex ante evaluation of new faculties at existing higher education institutions;
- ex ante evaluation of VET;
- ex ante evaluation of education and outcome requirements of bachelor programmes;
- ex ante evaluation of education and outcome requirements of master programmes;
- ex ante evaluation of bachelor programmes to be launched at an institution;
- ex ante evaluation of master programmes to be launched at an institution;
- ex ante accreditation of new doctoral schools at universities;
- ex ante evaluation of applications for professorial positions by universities;
- ex post accreditation of institutions in five-year cycles;
- ex post accreditation of VET and degree programmes and doctoral schools in five-year cycles.

The underlined and italic words signify the different types of HAC activities starting with 2013 compared to previous HAC legislation, mentioned in the report<sup>12</sup> of *External Evaluation of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee, 2008*:

- Instead of "accreditation", now there is "evaluation" of new higher education institutions, and "new faculties at existing higher education institutions";
- There are new tasks for HAC: "ex ante evaluation of VET" and "ex post accreditation of VET programmes";
- For the new Bachelor/Master programmes to be launched at an institution there is no more accreditation, but evaluation.

The new Higher Education Act allows HAC to do "ex ante evaluation" activities only for the new entities: "new higher education institutions", "new faculties at existing higher education institutions", VET programmes, "bachelor programs to be launched at an institution", "master programs to be launched at an institution" and "applications for professorial positions by universities".

"The HAC has got a new task, the evaluation of new short-cycle vocational higher education (VET) programmes, for which it has set a special expert committee."<sup>13</sup>

HAC unfolds "ex ante accreditation of new doctoral schools at universities" and "ex post accreditation of doctoral schools in five-year cycles"; the accreditation and reaccreditation are available only for doctoral schools.

An important change of the new Higher Education Act is that "... the Educational Authority reviews operating licenses of higher education institutions every five years, for which the opinion of the HAC is required. A fundamental change is that all applications, except those for professorial appointments, are submitted to the Educational Authority, which forwards it to the

<sup>11</sup> "The System of Education in Hungary", Ministry of National Resources, Budapest, 2011, 11\_System of Education in Hungary.pdf, annex to SER, p. 24

<sup>12</sup> External Evaluation of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee, Final report, June 2008, p. 6

<sup>13</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p. 35, p. 18, p. 13

HAC with a request for its opinion. The HAC, in turn, submits its findings to the Authority, whose job is to register the institution or program.”<sup>14</sup>

### 3.3.1. The operational framework of HAC

“The HAC’s membership was reduced from 19 to 18, with half the members delegated by the Minister of Human Resources (there was no member delegated by the Minister in the former HAC). The HAC president is selected by the Minister in agreement with the president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. All receive their letters of appointment by the Prime Minister. External stakeholders are no longer represented, there is no foreign member in the HAC anymore, and only the national body of doctoral students delegates a member but the national union of students does not. The membership term, once renewable, was extended from three to six years.”<sup>15</sup>

The organizational chart<sup>15</sup> is presented in Figure 2.

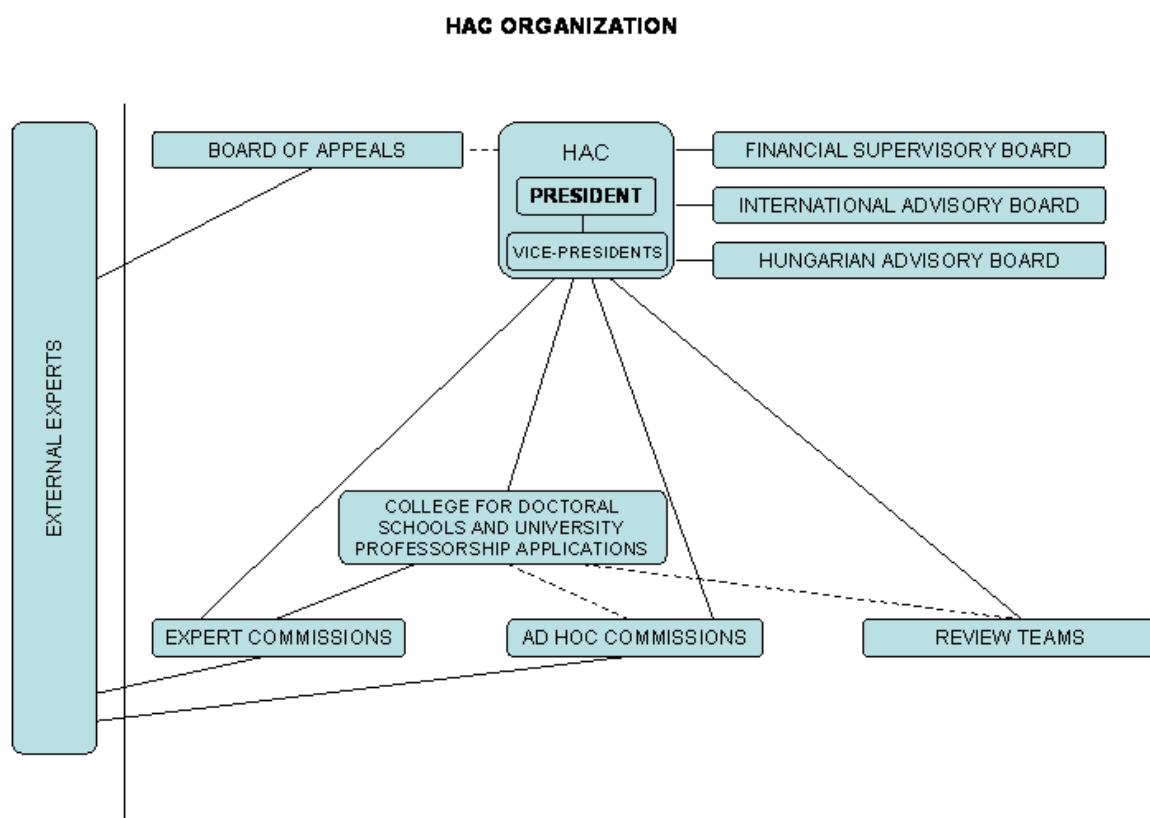


Figure 2. HAC organizational chart

The statutory boards of HAC are:

- Board of Financial Supervisors,
- Board of Appeals,
- Expert committees for disciplines,
- Other committees for:
  - College of University professorship and doctoral issues,
  - Conflict of interest and ethics,
  - Higher vocational education (VET),
  - Teacher training.
- Review teams are visiting committees which are set up to conduct the site visits.

HAC has an International Advisory Board<sup>16</sup>, with six renowned authorities on higher education and quality assurance from different European countries.

<sup>14</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p. 13

<sup>15</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p. 13, 27

<sup>16</sup> [www.mab.hu/joomla/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=232&Itemid=644&lang=en](http://www.mab.hu/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=232&Itemid=644&lang=en)

Also a Hungarian Advisory Board<sup>17</sup> was first set up in 2002 and, after a pause, re-established in 2012 with members from business field.

The Board of Appeals has three members delegated by the Minister and appointed by the Prime Minister. The appeals for the university professor applications are submitted directly to the HAC. All others may appeal through the Educational Authority.

"The Board of Appeals operates independently of the HAC and its members may participate in the public part of the HAC plenary meetings. Their task is to review cases in which the HAC is requested to issue a second opinion, based on the same standards and criteria that the HAC uses."<sup>18</sup>

The secretariat has a General Secretary, a Deputy, a Financial Director and a staff consisting of: 8 program officers with 5 of them being part-time, 4 administrative staff and one IT officer.

### 3.3.2. External Quality Assurance undertaken by HAC

"The first full cycle of institutional accreditation was completed in 2000, and the second cycle began in 2004. ... In 2004, the HAC also began a pilot project where it evaluated all study programmes in the country in two disciplines, history and psychology, within a short timeframe and with the same visiting teams. This parallel disciplinary accreditation has been continued since then. By the end of 2007, programmes in law, medicine, pharmaceuticals and dentistry had also been evaluated."<sup>19</sup>

"Since 2010, following an amendment to the previous Higher Education Act, the HAC has been conducting ex post evaluation and accreditation in five-year cycles. Institutional accreditation is in its third cycle while separate disciplinary programme accreditation is still going through its first cycle. It must be added that the ex post evaluation/accreditation activities of HAC, and their legal basis, are currently under discussion with the Ministry and the Educational Authority."<sup>20</sup>

The HAC activities during the period 2010-2012, presented in SER at p. 18-20, in Table 1 was modified here, in Table 4, based on additional information to SER, taken at site-visit. Table 4 contains the updated HAC decisions in the three years: 2010, 2011 and 2012, and the correspondence of statistics with procedures of HAC, indicated by numbers, in the right side:

- ex ante evaluation of new higher education institutions
- ex ante evaluation of new faculties at existing higher education institutions
- ex ante evaluation of VET programmes
- ex ante evaluation of education and outcome requirements of bachelor programmes **(1)**
- ex ante evaluation of education and outcome requirements of master programmes **(3)**
- ex ante evaluation of bachelor programmes to be launched at an institution **(2)**
- ex ante evaluation of master programmes to be launched at an institution **(4)**
- ex ante accreditation of new doctoral schools at universities **(8)**
- ex ante evaluation of applications for professorial positions by universities **(7)**
- ex post accreditation of institutions in five-year cycles **(5)**
- ex post accreditation of VET and degree programmes **(6)** //and doctoral schools in five-year cycles **(9)**

An English summary of the HAC's activities and related regulations is available on the HAC website under "Regulations, Procedures".<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> [www.mab.hu/joomla/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=233&Itemid=645&lang=en](http://www.mab.hu/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=233&Itemid=645&lang=en)

<sup>18</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p. 26

<sup>19</sup> External Evaluation of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee, Final report, June 2008, p. 6

<sup>20</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p. 22

<sup>21</sup> [www.mab.hu/joomla/images/doc/hac/regulations/Accr\\_criteria\\_101012.pdf](http://www.mab.hu/joomla/images/doc/hac/regulations/Accr_criteria_101012.pdf) (summary English version)

Type		Supported			Not supported		
		2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012
Ex ante accredit. - bachelor programs	Establishment nationally, <b>(1)</b>	1	2	4	9	1	1
	Launching at HEI, <b>(2)</b>	31	33	17	37	17	27
Ex-ante accred. - master programs	Establishment nationally, <b>(3)</b>	12	18	8	13	7	6
	Launching at HEI, <b>(4)</b>	86	53	49	44	47	35
Monitored	Bachelor programmes	6	4	1	9	4	0
	Master programmes	0	3	1	0	1	0
Ex-post institutional accreditation, <b>(5)</b>		<del>0</del> <b>7</b>	7	8	<del>0</del> <b>1</b>	0	0
Ex-post accreditation of all running programs in a discipline (bachelor + master), <b>(6)</b>		29	71	35	0	0	0
Evaluation of professorial appointments, <b>(7)</b>		104	98	90	94	40	32
Accreditation of doctoral schools	Ex ante, new, <b>(8)</b>	2	1	3	1	5	1
	Ex post schools and core members, <b>(9)</b>	39	135	43	12	81	17

Table 4. HAC decisions during 2010 - 2012

HAC unfolds activities<sup>22</sup> of:

- a. Ex-ante accreditation of study programmes and doctoral schools, opinion on proposed professorial appointments: paper-based exercise taking into account legal and HAC requirements; the HAC assigns two external experts and asks for their opinion, HAC's disciplinary sub-committee concerned discusses the case and makes a proposal, based on which HAC passes a resolution.
- b. Ex-post accreditation of study programmes and higher education institutions (self evaluation, site visit by HAC review panel, external report, HAC resolution, monitoring).

Types of HAC activities (SER p. 18 - 19) from starting date, regulatory basis of ruling them, type of HAC decisions and comments on them are presented in the Table 5.

<sup>22</sup> "National Report regarding the Bologna Process implementation 2009-2012, Hungary", <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/National%20reports/Hungary%20Annex.pdf>, p. 18

### Evaluation and accreditation activities undertaken by HAC – scheduling and explanations on their present status

Activity (code)	Date	Regulatory basis	Type of HAC decision	Comment
ex ante evaluation of new higher education institutions	1.09.93 -	HE Act 1993, 2005, 2011	expert opinion for EA*	Until Sept 2012 the EA/minister was bound to HAC opinion.
ex ante evaluation of new faculties at existing higher education institutions	1.09.96 – 1.01.10 1.09.12 – ?	HE Act 1993, 2005, 2011	expert opinion for EA*	Law to be amended in 2013.
Operation of foreign HEI in Hungary	1.09.96 – 1.01.09 1.09.12 –	HE Act 1996 amendment, 2005, 2011	expert opinion for EA	
ex ante evaluation of VET programs to be launched	1.09.96 – 1.03.06 1.09.12 –	HE Act 1996 amendment VET Gov. decree 2012	expert opinion for EA*	To be included in HE Act in 2013
ex ante evaluation of education and outcome requirements of bachelor programs (establishing the program in Hungary) (1)	1.09.93 -	HE Act 1993, 2005, 2011	expert opinion for EA	Until Sept 2012 the EA was bound to HAC opinion.
ex ante evaluation of education and outcome requirements of master programs (establishing the program in Hungary) (3)	1.09.93 -	HE Act 1993, 2005, 2011	expert opinion for EA	Until Sept 2012 the EA was bound to HAC opinion.
ex ante evaluation of bachelor programs to be launched at an institution (launching the program in a given HEI) (2)	1.09.93 -	HE Act 1993, 2005, 2011	expert opinion for EA*	Until Sept 2012 the EA was bound to HAC opinion.
ex ante evaluation of master programs to be launched at an institution (launching the program in a given HEI) (4)	1.09.93 -	HE Act 1993, 2005, 2011	expert opinion for EA*	Until Sept 2012 the EA was bound to HAC opinion.
ex ante accreditation of new doctoral schools (8)	1.09.93 -	HE Act 1993, 2005, 2011	accreditation	EA makes the licensing decision but it is bound to the HAC opinion. In appeals the ministry is not bound to HAC opinion.
ex ante evaluation of applications for professorial positions (7)	2.07.2000 -	HEA amendment 2000	expert opinion for HEI	In the 2011 HE Act this is the only procedure where the direct contact of HEIs and HAC remained.
ex post accreditation of institutions in five-year cycles	1.09.93 present** -	HE Acts 1993, 2005 (not in HE Act 2011) HAC By-laws 2012	accreditation	The legal basis is still not clear under the new HE Act, will probably be part of EA procedure for renewing the operational license of HEI (5 years-cycle)
ex post accreditation of VET and degree programs (6) and doctoral schools in five-year cycles (9)	Implemented as parallel disciplinary accreditation procedure from 2004 onwards.	HAC Gov. decree amendment 1997 HE Act amendment 2010 (not in HE Act 2011) HAC By-laws 2012	accreditation	The legal basis is still not clear under the new HE Act. EA wants it to be part of procedure for renewing the operational license of HEI (see above). HAC wishes to continue it as a separate procedure (parallel disciplinary accreditation).

\* All HAC decisions are made in the form of HAC resolutions

\*\* Until end of 2006, all programs of the HEIs were scrutinized (accredited) in this procedure

Table 5. Types of evaluation and accreditation activities undertaken by HAC

### 3.4. The engagement of the agency with the ENQA membership provisions/ ESG

In SER, HAC states that it developed its standards in accordance with the ESG.<sup>23</sup>

The HAC activities of accreditation type (their codes in brackets) mentioned in Table 5, are:

- ex post accreditation of institutions in five-year cycles (5),
  - ex post accreditation of VET and degree programmes (6),
  - ex ante accreditation of new doctoral schools (8),
  - and ex post accreditation of doctoral schools in five-year cycles (9)
- when HAC can take decisions.

HAC has an advisory role for the Educational Authority, in all the other evaluation activities mentioned in Table 5.

In HAC's opinion "the recent changes in the legal framework and the speed with which the secondary legislation had to be developed have tied down the energies of the HAC in the past months. The fact that applications are now submitted to the Educational Authority, which forwards them to the HAC with the request for its expert opinion, and which operates under its own legal framework, has an impact on the HAC, both internally and in relation to higher education institutions."<sup>24</sup>

HAC has an active international activity and is engaged in the actions of higher education and quality assurance promoting of ENQA, ECA and ESG in many ways.

The HAC has been a full member of the ENQA since 2000, being part of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQA AHE) and founding member of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA).

HAC had members in high positions of these bodies:

- András Róna-Tas, the founder and first president of the HAC, has been on the Board of all three bodies and chaired the latter;
- the current general secretary, Tibor Szántó, was a board member in INQA AHE between 2004-2007 and, also from 2004 on served two terms as a member of the board of ENQA as well as being vice-president of the organization between 2007-2010;
- the HAC's program officer for foreign affairs, Christina Rozsnyai, acts as secretary general of CEENQA since its foundation; she was in the board of the European University Association's Institutional Evaluation Program (EUA); she is member of the Accreditation Commission FAK-INST of FIBAA Germany and member of the Board of the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria;
- the former HAC's president, György Bazsa, participated in international reviews and projects.

HAC participates in international projects and has relationships and cooperation agreements with other quality assurance agencies from: Albania, Croatia, and Lithuania. Some HAC members were invited as experts to review study programmes in Albania, Estonia, Lithuania, and Kosovo.

### 3.5. How the review was carried out

The preparation of the external review panel was provided with the telephone briefing conducted by *Dr. Pdraig Walsh* (from the ENQA Board) and *Natalie Lugano* (ENQA Secretariat) on 2 May 2013.

The schedule of the site visit was discussed and finalized together with HAC. The panel established a timetable working schedule in order to fulfill the purposes and to support the review process, based on the *indicative schedule of the review* mentioned in ToR (Annex 6.1 - *External Review Panel working schedule*).

The entire panel had a preparatory meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2013, in Budapest, before the site visit at HAC to outline the overall tasks and the issues for discussion. The preparatory meeting was helpful through discussions, to bring the external Panel members into a common spirit concerning the issues to consider further during the site visit.

<sup>23</sup> SER of HAC, Narch 2013, ch. 8, p.29

<sup>24</sup> SER of HAC, Narch 2013, ch. 8, p.30

The External Review Panel considers that the two-day site-visit provided relevant information for the purpose of the external review. During the two-day site visit the panel met with the established discussion groups of stakeholders from higher education institutions, the national unions of doctoral students and students, and other representatives relevant for the functions of the Agency (*Appendix 6.3 - Program of the site visit*).

The panel took the following procedural steps as relevant for the fulfillment of the review:

1. Establishing the external review panel working schedule (*Annex 6.1. External Review Panel working schedule*) in accordance with the schedule of the review (*Annex 6.2. Indicative schedule of the review*);
2. Analyzing the SER prepared by HAC and establishing a range of additional submitted and provided documents. These additional documents were submitted prior to or during the site-visit upon joint request of the Panel (*Annex 6.3. Documents for evidence*);
3. Understanding and considering the professional and political contexts which influence and determine the overall activity of HAC;
4. Harmonizing the lines of inquiry resulted after SER analysis, of all the panel members;
5. Establishing an agenda of issues to be attained for each discussion group;
6. Establishing the final form of the main questions for the various identified issues for discussions with the invited groups, in the evening of 27<sup>th</sup> May, according to the time-schedule for the two-day site-visit in Budapest;
7. The two-day site-visit to HAC during 28–29 May 2013, in Budapest, and meeting the representatives of stakeholders covering all the relevant procedures for HAC's activities (*Annex 6.4. Program of the site visit*);
8. Drafting and finalizing the panel's report on the basis of a common agreement of all members.

During the site visit and at the end of the second day of evaluation, the panel members discussed the evidence and arguments for the compliance of HAC with ESG and the ENQA membership criteria. A broad consensus on each criterion was reached.

## 4. FINDINGS - COMPLIANCE ENQA CRITERIA/EUROPEAN STANDARD AND GUIDELINES

### 4.1. ENQA Criterion 1/ ESG 3.1, ESG 3.3

#### 4.1.a ESG Part 2: External quality assurance processes

##### ESG 2.1 Use of Internal Quality Assurance Procedures within HE

<b>ESG Reference:</b> 2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures
<b>ENQA Criterion 1</b>
<b>Standard:</b> External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines
<b>Guideline(s):</b> The standards for internal quality assurance contained in Part 1 provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment process. It is important that the institutions' own internal policies and procedures are carefully evaluated in the course of external procedures, to determine the extent to which the standards are being met. If higher education institutions are to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance processes, and if those processes properly assure quality and standards, then external processes might be less intensive than otherwise.

#### (a) Evidence

As is mentioned in SER, the Ministry and the Educational Authority consider that the HAC should conduct ongoing institutional evaluations that incorporate opinions on all of their programmes and this should be done as part of the Educational Authority procedure reviewing the operating licenses of HEIs.

The HAC has "guidelines and evaluation and accreditation criteria, published on its website. Both institutional and program ex post procedures emphasize the internal quality assurance mechanisms of the institution. In addition, they distinguish between the threshold requirements that need to be met to receive accreditation and further quality indicators and quality assurance measures that the HAC evaluates."<sup>25</sup>

The HAC's guidebook for institutional accreditation shows the aspects of an institution to be evaluated, which the self-evaluation report should cover: teaching, research and development or creative artistic activity, financial management, internal quality assurance, following the ESG Part 1.<sup>25</sup>

Documents on the HAC website describe the methodology used in external quality assurance procedures, and it is accepted by HEIs.

The Annex "2\_Accr\_criteria\_101012.pdf" to SER presents the ex ante and ex post procedures of Hungarian accreditation system, which together serve to assure the quality of higher education.

The Annex "5\_Sample SelfAssGuide Medicine.pdf" shows the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures for internal assessments for medicine field.

#### (b) Analysis

HAC's standards for internal quality assurance procedures are looked for by guides<sup>26</sup> for internal assessments in accordance with ESG Part 1.

The standards for ex post program accreditation are based on the standards of ex ante evaluation, which contain minimum requirements for a degree program. In ex post procedures, the HAC additionally examines the internal quality assurance mechanism for the entire educational process of a given degree program, developed on the basis of the ESG: curriculum development, teaching evaluation at departmental meetings, student evaluations of teaching and satisfaction surveys, staff satisfaction surveys, classroom reviews of teaching performance. For the parallel evaluation of degree programmes in a given discipline each external evaluation team works out an additional set of criteria for the discipline on top of the provided common framework.

<sup>25</sup> SER of HAC, p. 31

<sup>26</sup> Institutional Guidebook, [www.mab.hu/joomla/images/doc/hac/regulations/Accr\\_criteria\\_101012.pdf](http://www.mab.hu/joomla/images/doc/hac/regulations/Accr_criteria_101012.pdf) (summary English version)



The panel interviews with leaders of state and private HEIs, representatives of HEIs and with Hungarian Rectors' Conference (HRC) expressed positive perceptions of the content of the evaluations procedures, which keep them in a continuous activity for the quality assurance and quality improvement.

In addition to the guidelines of ESG Part 1, the HAC has elaborated detailed guidelines and institutional background documents for each standard.

- *Policy and procedures for quality assurance*

HAC's EQA framework requires HEIs to have their own policies and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes. HEIs explained accordingly how they are developing a culture of quality and quality assurance, by implementing strategies, policies and procedures for the continuous enhancement of quality. They do include a role for students and other stakeholders. The students represent ¼ of members of all the leading entities at faculties' and HEIs' level.

- *Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards*

HAC's EQA concepts are based on that institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards. HAC has additional criteria, such as:

- the conditions for teaching in a foreign language,
- new programmes should be compatible with the HEI's/faculty's strategy,
- programme development should take into consideration the results of student evaluations.

- *Assessment of students*

Institutions are required to include this aspect in their self evaluation report based on published criteria, regulations and procedures.

- *Quality assurance of teaching staff* must be proved by the HEI in their reports. It is also important to note that HAC also has the mission of evaluating the professorial positions.

- *Learning resources and student support* envisages that institutions should ensure that the resources for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each study programme. In addition HAC undertakes the disciplinary accreditation which is checking also this aspect.

- *Information systems. HEI's are expected to* collect, analyze and use the relevant information to ensure an effective management of their study programmes and other activities. An additional HAC criterion refers to the comparison of the institution to other Hungarian and foreign HEIs using the information system.

- *Public information* of institutions must be published and updated, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering.

In each disciplinary accreditation process the HAC evaluates all programmes in the selected discipline taught at all HEIs in the country with one expert pool within a timeframe of several months. The experts develop evaluation criteria based on a core set of HAC criteria and adapt them to the requirements of the given discipline. The core accreditation criteria are the same as for ex ante accreditation for new programmes launched at HEI (college or university) and incorporating the criteria for Education and Outcome Requirements.

**(c) Conclusion**

Fully compliant

**(d) Recommendation**

None

ESG 2.2 Development of External Quality Assurance Processes

<p><b>ESG Reference:</b> 2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes</p> <p><b>ENQA Criterion 1</b></p> <p><b>Standard:</b> The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.</p>
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**Guideline(s):** In order to ensure clarity of purpose and transparency of procedures, external quality assurance methods should be designed and developed through a process involving key stakeholders, including higher education institutions. The procedures that are finally agreed should be published and should contain explicit statements of the aims and objectives of the processes as well as a description of the procedures to be used. As external quality assurance makes demands on the institutions involved, a preliminary impact assessment should be undertaken to ensure that the procedures to be adopted are appropriate and do not interfere more than necessary with the normal work of higher education institutions.

### **(a) Evidence**

All the procedures, guidelines and criteria for evaluation and accreditation are accessible from the HAC Hungarian website, with a select few also in English.

HAC's By-Laws describe the quality assurance processes and the guidelines for these tasks are specifying the aims and the objectives, being published on the HAC web site.

"The HAC has recently been given the additional charge of evaluating new VET programmes. The relevant government decree<sup>27</sup> was issued only in August 2012, without being specified in the preceding legislation. The HAC set up an expert committee and worked out the procedures and criteria for evaluation."<sup>28</sup>

The new By-laws contain about 20 connected internal regulations, accreditation and evaluation criteria, effective at September 1st 2012, and the connected evaluation guidelines and forms.

The members of the HAC are involved in the development of each set of criteria and procedures, since they have to vote for them to go into effect. The major stakeholders from higher education are invited to participate in the public part of the plenary sessions.

In working out its criteria and procedures HAC has also consulted with the Hungarian Rectors' Conference when the bachelor and master programmes were introduced in 2005.

When the university professorship criteria were revised in 2007, the Rectors' Conference, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Higher Education and Research Council were consulted.

Together with the National Doctoral Council, the HAC worked out the regulations for evaluating and accrediting doctoral schools, which are issued as a government decree.<sup>29</sup>

The HAC built an electronic evaluation database (TIR) and a database of doctoral schools. The Education Authority uses its own higher education information system (FIR), which will enable it to conduct evaluations in the near future, according to the new Law.<sup>29</sup>

HAC also considered the feedback from its stakeholders when it updated all its guidelines to include the new legal requirements or to make them more user-friendly and comprehensible.

### **(b) Analysis**

The Panel concludes that the external quality assurance processes are in place; the procedures and the reports are published on public web site.

The external quality assurance processes were developed through extensive consultation with all key stakeholders, including HEIs. This consultation was positively considered by stakeholders, as the Panel found during the meetings with all key stakeholders: leaders of state and private HEIs, HRC, NDC, review teams, expert committees and representatives of chambers and labor market.

HAC is also engaged with the Ministry in discussions to propose amendments to the Higher Education Act. "... the Ministry has requested the HAC to propose changes for amendments to the Higher Education Act, which the HAC did in early February 2013."<sup>30</sup>

All quality assurance processes are generally well and clearly described with clear criteria.

HAC established a new set of rules and procedures as a consequence of the new legal framework for VET programmes, in cooperation with HEIs. In order to meet the deadline

<sup>27</sup> Government Decree 230/2012 (VIII.28) on higher education vocational training

<sup>28</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p. 20, 33

<sup>29</sup> Annex 6 at SER of HAC, 6\_Annual\_Report 2011\_12.pdf, p. 7

<sup>30</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p. 14

when the programmes had to be publicly announced, so that students can enroll in September 2013, the 230 VET programme applications were evaluated by the HAC in December 2012 and January 2013. The Panel has noted that the time was limited to develop a new well functioning concept for EQA.

Feedback is solicited in the annual surveys to evaluated institutions and programmes and the peer reviewers. The Panel saw the results of these surveys. Also informal feedback is ongoing through personal contact with institutions and experts.

### (c) Conclusion

Fully compliant

### (d) Recommendation

External stakeholders should be more involved and trained for these processes, also foreign experts, as much as possible. This would contribute to a broader recognition of HAC processes by the society at larger and to more transparency.

#### ESG 2.3 Criteria for Decisions

<p><b>ESG Reference:</b> 2.3 Criteria for decisions procedures  <b>ENQA Criterion 1 cont.</b></p>
<p><b>Standard:</b> Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.</p>
<p><b>Guideline(s):</b> Formal decisions made by quality assurance agencies have a significant impact on the institutions and programmes that are judged. In the interests of equity and reliability, decisions should be based on published criteria and interpreted in a consistent manner. Conclusions should be based on recorded evidence and agencies should have in place ways of moderating conclusions, if necessary.</p>

### (a) Evidence

"The criteria for all evaluations and accreditation conducted by the HAC are explicit and are published on the HAC's website, both as HAC resolutions, and in full for each type of procedure."<sup>31</sup>

"While ex post evaluations concentrate on processes and outputs, ex ante evaluations are chiefly input focused. In ex ante procedures, the minimum requirements for program accreditation encompass the criteria set down in the law on the one hand, and additional quality criteria developed by the HAC. The HAC criteria encompass chiefly the number of ECTS for curricular units and the curricular structure, suitability for qualification levels, the qualifications of the academic staff, student assessment of learning, teaching and research infrastructure. In addition, the ex ante evaluation/accreditation of bachelor and master programmes and of doctoral schools focuses on the academic/professional content, academic staff quality and infrastructural aspects. With doctoral schools their internal quality assurance mechanism are also examined."<sup>32</sup>

As mentioned above at ESG 2.1, the Annex "2\_Accr\_criteria\_101012.pdf" to SER presents the ex ante and ex post procedures of Hungarian accreditation system, which together serve to assure the quality of higher education. The HAC criteria are derived from the legislation and from the ESG.

The general criteria, based on the legislation, refer to:

- information about the institution in general:
  - description of the institution's/faculty's past and vision of the future,
  - actions taken after previous accreditation decisions and recommendations,
  - the HEI's/faculty's basic documents, organization, governance and strategy,
  - the HEI's/faculty's educational structure,
  - cooperation between faculties in teaching and making optimal use of the institutional infrastructure,
  - participation of the Student Union in the HEI's/faculty's leadership,

<sup>31</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p. 33

<sup>32</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p. 31

- procedures for joint programmes,
- SWOT analysis and action plans.
- key achievements of the HEI/faculty:
  - ✓ in teaching,
    - education outcomes, student numbers (enrollment, graduation rates, drop-out rates, national student competition results) in the past five years,
    - employment figures, student tracking in the labor market,
  - ✓ in R&D and/or artistic activity,
    - main scientific publications, development, innovation and tender results (in Hungary and internationally),
    - regional, national and international relations and their results,
  - ✓ in financing,
    - financial figures of the HEI/faculty,
    - external financial resources.

The criteria based on the ESG refer to quality assurance mechanisms of HEIs which comply with the European Standards and Guidelines Part 1, completed with the HAC elaborated criteria. The ESG based criteria are described above at the ESG 2.1 - Use of Internal Quality Assurance Procedures and in the Annex "2\_Accr\_criteria\_101012.pdf".

"Accreditation decisions of the HAC pass through a hierarchy of levels. For ex ante evaluation, two or three external experts are invited from the HAC's standing pool of over 1500 experts accumulated over the years to evaluate applications via the HAC's TIR database, for which they receive an access code. The replies are collated by an assigned staff member and brought before the expert committee for the relevant discipline. This committee discusses the application and received expert reviews in depth and makes a recommendation to the plenary, reported by the committee chair."<sup>33</sup>

"The procedures for ex ante evaluation of institutions or degree and VET programs as well as for evaluating university professorial positions have three documents for the evaluation procedure: guidelines for HEIs, criteria for evaluation, evaluation form for experts."<sup>32</sup>

"Doctoral schools have a description of the procedure and criteria for evaluation, which cover both ex ante and ex post procedures."<sup>33</sup>

"For ex post accreditation the same core criteria apply as for ex ante procedures. They are incorporated or referred to in the ex post documents. For institutions there are self-evaluation guidelines and evaluation criteria, intended for both the institution and peer reviewers, and a separate handbook for peer reviewers, and there are additional self-evaluation guidelines and principles for denominational institutions. For programmes to be evaluated in disciplinary groups there is a document describing the procedure, guidelines (with a core description and criteria from which the various disciplinary expert committees develop their set of criteria) and a separate handbook for peer reviewers."<sup>34</sup>

Although the various documents have evolved over time, the documents and approaches have been kept consistent by HAC within a given type of procedure.<sup>34</sup>

### **(b) Analysis**

The evidence for a consistent system with all details worked out in advance and publicly available was confirmed in interviews held during site visit with representatives of the review teams, of expert committees, of National Union of Students and Union of Doctoral Students.

In the discussions with the group of students involved in HAC procedures, who recently participated in HAC evaluations, being representatives of National Union of Students and Union of Doctoral Students, they expressed the dissatisfaction of students from bachelor and master programmes who have no representative in HAC plenary and hence, no voting right in HAC decisions. Only one doctoral student, representative of the Union of Doctoral Students is member of HAC and can vote.

<sup>33</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p. 26

<sup>34</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p. 26, p. 34

The issue of varying consistency in applying the criteria between the various expert groups is addressed in the decision-making process that shows a hierarchy from HAC experts' committees to the plenary which is intended to balance out inconsistencies. There are thus two levels of evaluation along the decision-making process which express a will of rigor of the process and application of criteria for decisions both by the members of committees voting and then the plenary.

This process intends to ensure that there is a consistent application of the criteria in decision-making. The agency confirmed that there is a process for moderating the decision-making when the chair of the expert committee presents the reports under consideration to the Plenary.

Concerning the new procedure of accreditation of VET programmes designed in 2012, the Panel notes there has been misunderstandings, leading to a conflict between HAC and the Hungarian Educational Authority. The Educational Authority overturned the HAC decisions for 42 VET programmes, in January 2013. The Ministry ensured the Panel that it was an accidental event due to time pressure and great workload for HAC. The reason for rejection of some VET programmes applications by HAC was the different consideration between comments and recommendations. The Ministry changed the HAC decisions, considering them as opinions based on different criteria, than those accepted by Educational Authority. The Ministry ensured that a more normal situation could be re-established after two years when the VET programmes will have to follow the accreditation procedure.

The Panel considers that this incident in a transitory situation is not sufficient as such not to recognize a full compliance with the ESG 2.3. Criteria for Decisions as far as HAC own decisions are concerned.

### **(c) Conclusion**

Fully compliant

### **(d) Recommendation**

Further HAC clarifies, in negotiation with the Ministry, the distribution of tasks and the adequate timetable and resources required for the new VET programmes procedure, in order to ensure its credibility and sustainability. Both HAC and the Educational Authority should do their utmost to avoid similar situations in the future.

In improving this new QA procedure, HAC should pay a special attention to the European VET tools and programmes, the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET) and sectoral approaches.

## ESG 2.4 Processes Fit for Purpose

<p><b>ESG Reference:</b> 2.4 Processes fit for purpose procedures</p> <p><b>ENQA Criterion 1 cont.</b></p>
<p><b>Standard:</b> All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.</p>
<p><b>Guideline(s):</b> Quality assurance agencies within the EHEA undertake different external processes for different purposes and in different ways. It is of the first importance that agencies should operate procedures which are fit for their own defined and published purposes. Experience has shown, however, that there are some widely-used elements of external review processes which not only help to ensure their validity, reliability and usefulness, but also provide a basis for the European dimension to quality assurance. Amongst these elements the following are particularly noteworthy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• insistence that the experts undertaking the external quality assurance activity have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their task</li> <li>• the exercise of care in the selection of experts</li> <li>• the provision of appropriate briefing or training for experts</li> <li>• the use of international experts</li> <li>• participation of students</li> <li>• ensuring that the review procedures used are sufficient to provide adequate evidence to support the findings and conclusions reached</li> <li>• the use of the self-evaluation/site visit/draft report/published report/follow-up model of review</li> </ul> <p>Recognition of the importance of institutional improvement and enhancement policies as a fundamental element in the assurance of quality.</p>

### **(a) Evidence**

HAC is training and briefing reviewers; it issues detailed guidelines to all experts; it provides templates for reports and activities. HAC is providing ½ day briefing session to all review teams in the HAC headquarters, for the institutional accreditation.

"Provisions for briefing experts participating in visiting teams are in place. There are seminars for experts designated for upcoming visits held once a year. In addition, there are briefing meetings prior to the visit, where the review team, together with the program officer in charge, discusses the division of tasks."<sup>35</sup>

"One member of review teams has to be a quality assurance expert. Contrary to *ex post* evaluations, in *ex ante* procedures, there is no organized training for experts involved beyond the evaluation forms (templates) and other written documents. This is, again, a weakness of the HAC even though the number of experts (more than 1500) does not make it easy to organize such trainings."<sup>36</sup>

"Greater use of international experts would be desirable but is currently unattainable. This is due in part to budget constraints and in part to language issues, but there is also some resistance against it on the part of higher education. International experts are invited chiefly in subjects for which not enough competent Hungarian experts can be found who have no conflict of interest in the given review, e.g. the accreditation of denominational institutions."<sup>36</sup>

"Students are invited to participate in visits conducted for institutional accreditation and for parallel, disciplinary program accreditation. Invitation is done solely through the National Union of Students in Hungary and the Association of Hungarian Ph.D. Students."<sup>36</sup>

### **(b) Analysis**

HAC has generally sound EQA procedures. However, the panel has some remarks.

Involving international experts in the external evaluation processes was a subject of the Follow-up HAC Report from 2010.<sup>37</sup> The low usage of international experts is due to language and costs issues. The agency is attempting to widen its use of international experts who have expertise in the Hungarian language. The review team recognizes that this is a challenge for the Agency to ensure provision of the international perspective in QA procedures.

There is no training for experts involved in *ex-ante* procedures and only a very short training (3 hours) for *ex-post* procedures. The Panel noted that the review teams didn't seem to have enough time for site visits in institutional evaluations.

There is no site visit for *ex-ante* evaluation. Further, the external evaluators are anonymous for *ex-ante* evaluation. It might be fit for purpose, but the procedure is unusual, because the same chair of the respective HAC committee appoints reviewers, for the same study field. Considering that the country is small and everybody knows everyone, some incompatibilities may appear.

Students participate fully in all visits to institutions, but are not involved in *ex ante* accreditation procedures. National Union of Students delegates a member in the visiting teams of experts for the *ex post* institutional accreditation.

The Panel noticed that in the parallel evaluations of all the degree programmes in the country, in a given discipline, difficulties could occur such as assessing the interdisciplinary character of some study programmes, conflict situations when HAC evaluates *ex-ante*, *ex-post* for the same study programme and for which, it had also previously appointed the professorial positions. But the interviewed groups showed a good acceptance and recognition of the usefulness of this HAC activity. The group of leaders of HEIs and the representatives of Hungarian Rectors Conference argued that the cross-checking for each discipline envisages respecting the number of teaching hours, keeping the teaching staff initially appointed for the courses and seminars, and the compliance with the main topics of the discipline curriculum.

<sup>35</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p. 34

<sup>36</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p. 35

<sup>37</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p. 50

The 2008 External ENQA Review recommended (recommendation 6.1.) *moving to an institutional, ex-post approach to quality*, including *"move to ex-post, phasing out ex-ante evaluations and accreditation"* and *"Once the current mass of bachelor and master program accreditation is over, refocus on institutional approach, moving away from program approach, which can be maintained for ad hoc needs"*<sup>38</sup>. In its Follow-up Progress Report from 2010, HAC explained that "the ex-post disciplinary program accreditation serves as a follow-up of the ex-ante accreditations and as such, is in harmony with the ESG", and that "programme accreditation is still more suited to the general purpose of accreditation in the Hungarian context". It also considered that "internal QA systems at Hungarian HEIs are still not robust enough for such a change"<sup>38</sup>.

The Panel understands the reasons and situation of HAC, but noted that the feedback of many stakeholders was that HEIs have improved their internal QA culture and systems, as a result of the long and fruitful activity of HAC.

### **(c) Conclusion**

Fully compliant

### **(d) Recommendation**

The level of training and provision of resources for the experts involved in ex ante accreditation procedures should be amplified. The time allowed for site visits could be longer, depending on HAC funding, for the institutional accreditation, for covering the entire HEIs to be visited.

The participation of students in all processes, including having voting rights in the HAC Plenary must be especially considered.

However the Panel noted as quite unusual in the EHEA that the status of student means automatically to be a member of National Union of Students in Hungary and that the students cannot independently make unions.

The Panel believes that the orientations of the 2008 ENQA Review to move towards an institutional, ex-post approach to quality, also emphasized by the International Advisory Board, should still be considered by HAC as an objective. The HAC has to consider how it can best keep and assert its leading role in quality assurance of higher education, in the context of the New Higher Education Act, in cooperation with all the other bodies and stakeholders.

## ESG 2.5 Reporting

<p><b>ESG Reference:</b> 2.5 Reporting procedures  <b>ENQA Criterion 1 cont.</b></p>
<p><b>Standard:</b>  Reports should be published and should be written in a style which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.</p>
<p><b>Guideline(s):</b>  In order to ensure maximum benefit from external quality assurance processes, it is important that reports should meet the identified needs of the intended readership. Reports are sometimes intended for different readership groups and this will require careful attention to structure, content, style and tone. In general, reports should be structured to cover description, analysis (including relevant evidence), conclusions, commendations, and recommendations.  There should be sufficient preliminary explanation to enable a lay reader to understand the purposes of the review, its form, and the criteria used in making decisions. Key findings, conclusions and recommendations should be easily locatable by readers. Reports should be published in a readily accessible form and there should be opportunities for readers and users of the reports (both within the relevant institution and outside it) to comment on their usefulness.</p>

<sup>38</sup> SER of HAC, March 2013, p. 46

### **(a) Evidence**

As it is mentioned in the SER "Reports on institutional accreditation are elaborate and the HAC is not aware of complaints about their comprehensibility, though their style necessarily varies according to their authors. There is a template for accreditation reports. They are published in full on the HAC's website."<sup>39</sup>

HAC publishes the outcomes of external evaluations on its website, [www.mab.hu](http://www.mab.hu), as it is also mentioned in "National Report regarding the Bologna process implementation, 2009-2012" - more than 75% of all Hungarian higher education institutions publish critical and negative outcomes of quality assurance evaluations on their web-sites.<sup>40</sup>

HAC also produces disciplinary accreditation reports which include an extensive analysis of the given field at the time of the review. They are published in separate volumes and are also accessible through the website. "Ex post evaluation reports are published on the HAC website; ex ante accreditation decisions, with the exception of those on professorial positions, they are accessible on the website in the form of the HAC resolution and its explanation."<sup>41</sup>

The structure of the web page for resolutions is the following:

- Resolutions
  - Institutional accreditation
    - Reports, 2nd round
    - Reports, 3rd round
  - Disciplinary program accreditation
  - Institutions and their programs
  - Quick list
  - Doctoral schools (TIR)
  - University professorships
    - 2010
    - 2011
    - 2012
    - 2013
  - Resolutions of the Board of Appeals
  - Accredited foreign clinical practice sites
  - Searching in the TIR database

The reports have a standard format. A program officer of the HAC staff is responsible for editing the report. The Deputy Secretary General and/or program officer responsible for institutional accreditation and/or Secretary General read the reports to check for consistency and evidence for findings.

"Information managed by the Educational Authority (involved in registration issues conditional upon prior expert review and evaluation by the quality assurance agency) is not yet accessible online but can be accessed upon request addressed to the Authority."<sup>42</sup>

The students applying for study at a higher education institution are very well aware that they can do so only for programs that are published with the approval of the Ministry / Educational Authority in the annual Educational Catalog. But the catalog does not list the accreditation status of a program. "Consequently, there is little public awareness about the significance or nature of accreditation. Moreover, the HAC does not have the resources to raise awareness about the value of accreditation to the general public, which learns about the HAC at most via the media in response to complaints about negative decisions."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> SER of HAC, p. 35

<sup>40</sup> "National Report regarding the Bologna Process implementation 2009-2012, Hungary", <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/National%20reports/Hungary%20Annex.pdf>, p. 21

<sup>41</sup> SER of HAC, p. 35

<sup>42</sup> SER of HAC, p. 37



### **(b) Analysis**

The Panel has assessed the accessibility of all documents on the HAC website. The decisions of HAC in their external quality assurance reports are clearly indicated. Also the follow-up reports are respecting the requirements and the structure asked by HAC.

However there are situations when accessibility of full information is more of an issue when it comes to the catalogue of programmes, published by the Educational Authority, which does not refer to accreditation decisions of HAC. This means that students do not have direct access to HAC's decisions through this information channel. This is important because this catalogue is used by students when they choose their education.

### **(c) Conclusion**

Fully compliant

### **(d) Recommendation**

The Panel recommends that HAC ensures full communication of reports to all stakeholders and clearly addresses their specific information interests. Also the Panel strongly recommends that HAC uses clearer signposts to its Web English version.

Transparency through coherent and reliable information of the public and the students requires that HAC's decisions should be included also in the Educational Catalogue.

#### ESG 2.6 Follow-up Procedures

<b>ESG Reference:</b> 2.6 Follow up-procedures
<b>ENQA Criterion 1 cont.</b>
<b>Standard:</b> Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.
<b>Guideline(s):</b> Quality assurance is not principally about individual external scrutiny events: it should be about continuously trying to do a better job. External quality assurance does not end with the publication of the report and should include a structured follow-up procedure to ensure that recommendations are dealt with appropriately and any required action plans drawn up and implemented. This may involve further meetings with institutional or programme representatives. The objective is to ensure that areas identified for improvement are dealt with speedily and that further enhancement is encouraged.

### **(a) Evidence**

HAC has follow-up procedures. The activities of ex ante evaluation do not set follow up deadlines to HEIS, being merely support or nonsupport decisions. The positive opinions of the HAC may be accompanied by some comments for improving minor weaknesses or HAC can establish a monitoring procedure. The comments for quality enhancement are given based on a scheduled program to be followed by HEIs, while the monitoring procedures are conducted by HAC. If the HEIs applications are not supported, HAC provides reasons for the rejected decision. In these cases, institutions may submit new applications and start a new procedure.

"Ex post accreditation is conducted in five year intervals. A positive accreditation decision may contain a request for actions and a specific action plan in response to the HAC's findings. A deadline is specified when the HAC will examine the action plan and also the concrete actions taken. This may be done based only on a submitted document or the HAC may decide to verify them in a site visit. Each ex post accreditation examines progress with respect to weaknesses identified in the previous accreditation report. If the HAC continues to find quality concerns it may revoke accreditation. As a consequence, the Educational Authority may revoke its license".<sup>43</sup>

The review teams include follow-up analyses in their reports, based on relevant guidelines for this kind of process.

HAC has general follow-up meetings, planned to be held as part of the third round of the ex post institutional accreditation procedure. "These meetings are scheduled for the middle of the 5-year cycle with the first such meeting to be organized in 2013 (although

<sup>43</sup> SER of HAC, p. 36

negotiations with the Educational Authority and the Ministry on the future of institutional accreditation are pending).<sup>44</sup>

### **(b) Analysis**

When HAC recommendations are made in the evaluation report, they are followed up as recommended in the report. Some of the follow-up recommendations are contained in a follow-up review for the visit, 5 years later. All action points are followed up on in subsequent reviews.

After the recent changes in the education law in Hungary, HAC has a more advisory role, as the Educational Authority is now in charge of making decisions on the basis of HAC's reviews. Follow-up activities will be impacted by the practice of the new distribution of tasks resulting from the Higher Education Act.

There is a systemic risk that leading boards of institutions and programmes coordinators may be less concerned with follow-up recommendations and with the implementation of quality improvement plans. This is a result of the sector knowing the decisions of HAC might be overturned by the Educational Authority. This creates a situation of expectation which could lead to a cumulative loss of confidence in the HAC QA processes on the side of experts and HEIs. It should be brought rapidly more clarity in the effective distribution of competences and the independence of HAC processes.

The Panel considers that the new changes of Higher Education Law as regards to HAC tasks, combined with a lack of resources might not allow for following-up activities in the third round of institutional accreditation for the 5-years schedule 2010/11 - 2014/15.

### **(c) Conclusion**

Substantially compliant

### **(d) Recommendation**

The Panel recommends that HAC addresses the problem of systemic risk, above mentioned, together with the Ministry, the Educational Authority the National Conference of Rectors and the National Doctoral Council.

#### ESG 2.7 Periodic Reviews

<b>ESG Reference:</b> 2.7 Periodic reviews
<b>ENQA Criterion 1 cont.</b>
<b>Standard:</b> External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.
<b>Guideline(s):</b> Quality assurance is not a static but a dynamic process. It should be continuous and not 'once in a lifetime'. It does not end with the first review or with the completion of the formal follow-up procedure. It has to be periodically renewed. Subsequent external reviews should take into account progress that has been made since the previous event. The process to be used in all external reviews should be clearly defined by the external quality assurance agency and its demands on institutions should not be greater than are necessary for the achievement of its objectives.

### **(a) Evidence**

The Higher Education Act states that the Educational Authority "shall review operating licenses every five years" (Section 8 (2)). "The five-year evaluation cycle has been retained: the Educational Authority reviews operating licenses of higher education institutions every five years, for which the opinion of the HAC is required."<sup>45</sup> The coordination of the procedures of the two organizations is ongoing.

However, with the acceptance of the By-Laws the legal foundation should have been clarified and the HAC wishes to carry on its institutional accreditation procedures in line with the By-Laws and the HAC's 5-year schedule 2010/11-2014/15. Nevertheless, there are

<sup>44</sup> SER of HAC, p. 36

<sup>45</sup> SER of HAC, p. 13

institutions that question the legality of the HAC to initiate the current institutional accreditation procedure in 2012/13, arguing that only the Educational Authority has the right to initiate it."<sup>46</sup>

The HAC, therefore, continues its five-year evaluation cycles, which are also in line with existing accreditation time limits. The HEIs are in the process of writing their self-evaluation reports.

As mentioned in SER p. 17-18, for institutional accreditation: "Following a timetable agreed on with the Educational Authority and in conjunction with the review of operating licenses of higher education institutions, the HAC assesses and accredits the conditions for education, academic research and artistic activity and the organizational and operational arrangements at higher education institutions in five-year cycles, in accordance with its assessment criteria based on the ESG, and with special regard to the content of the institution's quality development scheme. It assesses whether the scheme is in compliance with the ESG, its organizational background, how it is executed and its outcomes evaluated and how the outcome requirements are monitored."

The Panel could see during the site visit the past and future schedules for the 5-years cycles of reviews of institutions. Until 2010, HAC conducted ex post accreditation procedures in eight-year cycles. Then the period of cycles changed to five-years and HAC has prepared the schedule of the third round of institutional accreditation, which is available on the HAC website. HEIs know exactly when they have to prepare themselves.

The relatively low number of HEIs having been involved in the ex-post institutional accreditation procedure during the recent years: 8 - in 2010, 7 - in 2011 and 8 - in 2012, from a total of 67 HEIs - might indicate a risk as far as the implementation of the 5 years cycle is concerned. However this seems to be settled with an objective of 18 HEIs for 2013.

The map of the HAC web page for accreditation activities of HEIs is:

- Accreditation
  - Institutional accreditation
    - Accreditation schedule 2010-2015
    - Evaluation criteria
    - Self-evaluation guidebook (pdf)
    - Self-evaluation guidebook (doc)
    - Self-evaluation guidebook for programs in theology
    - Handbook for evaluation teams
  - Program accreditation in disciplinary clusters
    - Procedure
    - Guidelines for individual fields
    - Handbook for evaluation teams
    - Places of excellence awards
  - Doctoral schools
  - .....

SER mentions at p. 19, as a cyclical activity the "ex post accreditation of VET and degree programs and doctoral schools in five-year cycles".

### **(b) Analysis**

Cycles of periodical accreditation are published on the web site and the information is available to all. There is little evidence about re ex post accreditation and evaluations as the HAC is still in discussions with the Ministry.

The Panel has some doubts whether the HAC has the sufficient resources to fully implement the required cycles for all institutions and programmes to be reviewed. The HAC activity began with difficulty after the implementation of the New Act, which implies several further negotiations and adaptations of its actions.

There are risks because of the reduced level of financial resources. There was also a challenge by a few HEIs about the legitimacy for HAC to continue with its institutional

<sup>46</sup> SER of HAC, p. 30

evaluation procedures as regards the context of the new Law, but this debate seems to be settled by now.

### (c) Conclusion

Substantially compliant

### (d) Recommendation

The Panel recommends HAC to address the issue of coherence between resources and tasks with the Educational Authority in order to implement the required cycles for all institutions and programmes to be reviewed.

## ESG 2.8 System-Wide Analysis

<b>ESG Reference:</b> 2.8 System-wide analysis <b>ENQA Criterion 1 cont.</b>
<b>Standard:</b> Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analyzing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments, etc.
<b>Guideline(s):</b> All external quality assurance agencies collect a wealth of information about individual programmes and/or institutions and this provides material for structured analyses across whole higher education systems. Such analyses can provide very useful information about developments, trends, emerging good practice and areas of persistent difficulty or weakness and can become useful tools for policy development and quality enhancement. Agencies should consider including a research and development function within their activities, to help them extract maximum benefit from their work

### (a) Evidence

HAC produces the following types of reports and publications available on the website: reports on the quality of higher education (irregular), the *Quality Gazette*, containing the HAC's decisions and major issues discussed (three issues per year), Yearbook (in Hungarian, annually) and special issues on particular subjects, annual reports (in English) and other publications (either in Hungarian or in English).

The HAC has annual surveys for participants in precedent institutional and disciplinary program evaluations, and meetings two years after institutional evaluations with institutional representatives, to discuss findings and follow-up actions.

The structure of web page on the HAC site is:

- Publication
  - HAC publications
    - Accreditation Gazette
    - HAC Annual Reports
    - Disciplinary program accreditation reports
    - Miscellaneous issues
  - Presentations
  - Articles and papers

### (b) Analysis

The panel finds that HAC has still a too limited activity allocated to system-wide analysis.

Some evidence of HAC system-wide analysis, as references to statements in SER, can be found in: the annual reports during the period under consideration 2008-2012<sup>47, 48, 49</sup>, the published newsletters three times per year and some published synthesized reports.

HAC implemented the ESG in the Hungarian higher education system. Further developments of these activities are understandably hindered in the current economic situation of HAC and with the resources at disposal.

<sup>47</sup> Annual Report on the Activities of the HAC in 2011/12, 2Annual\_Report 2011\_12\_Final 4Sept.doc

<sup>48</sup> THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE HAC IN 2009/10, 1Annual\_Report\_09.doc

<sup>49</sup> THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE HAC IN 2008, "HAC IN THE CROSSHAIRS: SHOULD QUALITY BE TARGETED?", ANNUAL\_REPORT\_08.DOC

### (c) Conclusion

Substantially compliant

### (d) Recommendation

The Panel recommends that HAC maintains a sufficient level of system-wide analysis, in order to improve cooperation with Educational Authority and other stakeholders.

Based on its good current expertise of the situation for all study fields and programmes, in accordance with the strategic policies of economic development of Hungary, system wide analysis would help to emphasize the key role, present importance and future potential of HAC activity for the progress of the higher education system in Hungary and for the country's development.

### 4.1.b. ENQA Criterion 1 / ESG 3.1, 3.3: Activities

#### ESG 3.1 Use of External Quality Assurance Procedures for Higher Education

<b>ESG Reference:</b> 3.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education
<b>ENQA Criterion 1 cont.</b>
<b>Standard:</b> The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.
<b>Guideline(s):</b> The standards for external quality assurance contained in Part 2 provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment process. The standards reflect best practices and experiences gained through the development of external quality assurance in Europe since the early 1990s. It is therefore important that these standards are integrated into the processes applied by external quality assurance agencies towards the higher education institutions. The standards for external quality assurance should together with the standards for external quality assurance agencies constitute the basis for professional and credible external quality assurance of higher education institutions.

### (a) Evidence and Analysis

Summarizing the previous conclusions of the Panel for the ESG Part 2, in Table 6, it can be seen that the Agency is deemed by the panel to be fully compliant with 5 ESG and – substantially compliant with 3 ESG. The global conclusion of the panel for ESG 3.1, is that the Agency can be considered as fully compliant.

ENQA Criterion 1/ ESG Reference 3.1	Sub- criterion	Conclusions of the Panel for:	
		ESG Part 2	ENQA Sub-criterion
<b>ESG 3.1: Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education/ Part 2</b>	ESG 2.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures /	fc	<b>FC</b>
	ESG 2.2 Development of external quality assurance processes procedures	fc	
	ESG 2.3 Criteria for decisions procedures	fc	
	ESG 2.4 Processes fit for purpose procedures	fc	
	ESG 2.5 Reporting procedures	fc	
	ESG 2.6 Follow up-procedures	sc	
	ESG 2.7 Periodic reviews	sc	
	ESG 2.8 System-wide analysis	sc	

Table 6. Conclusions for the ESG Part 2 of ESG 3.1.

### (b) Conclusion

Fully compliant

### ESG 3.3 Activities

<b>ESG Reference:</b> 3.3 Activities <b>ENQA Criterion 1 cont.</b>
<b>Standard:</b> Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis
<b>Guideline(s):</b> These may involve evaluation, review, audit assessment, accreditation or other similar activities and should be part of the core functions of the agency

#### (a) Evidence

The main activities are described in SER, at Chapter 6 "External Quality Assurance Undertaken by the HAC", p. 15-22. They are presented also in the present report, also in a comparative manner, in present days as opposed to the previous period, before the New Act started to be effective, at subchapter 3.3. *The main functions of the HAC, areas, responsibility and work, including the review methods it uses*, p. 8-13.

#### (b) Analysis and Recommendation

The requirements of this ESG and its guidelines have been presented above, through several previous ESG - reviews.

There might be a problem with the training of experts, especially training for ex-ante evaluation; for ex-post evaluations there are training activities, but very limited. This problem can be addressed by employing experienced peers also for ex-ante activities.

The use of international experts is another problem. This challenge is recognized also for small HEIs in the country. It is important for HAC to find a way to solve it.

The Panel was told that the participation of students in the decision-making process of HAC is an issue under consideration with the Ministry of National Resources and Educational Authority. Students have to be more clearly involved in all decision making processes.

#### (c) Conclusion

Fully compliant

#### ENQA Criterion 1/ ESG 3.1, ESG 3.3

ENQA Criterion 1 / ESG References	Conclusions of the Panel for:	
	ENQA Sub-criterion	ENQA Criterion
<b>ESG 3.1:</b> Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education/ Part 2	<b>FC</b>	
<b>ESG 3.3:</b> Activities	<b>FC</b>	
<b>ENQA Criterion 1/ ESG 3.1: ESG 3.3</b>		<b>FC</b>

Table 7. Conclusions for the ENQA Criterion 1

#### Conclusion

Fully compliant

#### 4.2. ENQA Criterion 2 / ESG 3.2: Official status

##### ESG 3.2 Official Status

<b>ESG Reference:</b> 3.2 Official status <b>ENQA Criterion 2</b>
<b>Standard:</b> Agencies should be formally recognized by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.
<b>Guideline(s):</b> -

### (a) Evidence

The official status is established within article 41, "The Hungarian Accreditation Committee", sections 70 and 71 of Act on National Higher Education CCIV/2011, passed by Parliament on December 23, 2011.

According to the Act, Section 70 (1)<sup>50</sup>: "The Hungarian Accreditation Committee is a national expert body promoting the supervision, assurance, and evaluation of the scientific quality of higher education, scientific research, and the quality of artistic creation, which participates under this Act in procedures relating to higher education institutions, with special regard to doctorate schools."

Section 70 (3) sets down the official status: "The Hungarian Accreditation Committee is authorized to acquire a non-profit legal status regulated in the Act on Rights of Association, non-profit status and the operation and funding of Civil Organizations."

As set down in its Deed of Foundation, updated, following the new Act, the HAC is a public benefit organization with legal entity «not recorded in the registry court» which means that the HAC is not registered as an organization by the relevant court, but by the Educational Authority.

The delegation of HAC members is set down in the Act, Section 71. An implementation governmental decree on the HAC (also dealing with the Higher Education Planning Body, formerly Higher Education and Research Council) was issued on February 22, 2012, titled *On Specific Issues Regarding Higher Education Quality Evaluation and Development* (19/2012 (II. 22.)). The decree prescribes HAC status and activities.

### (b) Analysis

HAC is the sole agency officially recognized at national level, having tasks in external quality assurance in the Hungarian higher education. The Agency is formally recognized in national legislation.

As compared with the former 2005 Higher Education Act, there is a lowering of status of HAC in the new Higher Education Act 2011. The independence of HAC is no longer formally mentioned in the Law, as in the 2005 Law which declared the HAC is "an independent body of experts," but in the Government Decree (19/2012, II.22, §4(1)) it is specifying that the HAC is an independent organization.

There remains a lack of clarity in the distribution of competences between HAC and the Educational Authority regarding the articulation of licensing and accreditation.

### (c) Conclusion

Substantially compliant

### (d) Recommendation

None

## 4.3. ENQA Criterion 3 / ESG 3.4: Resources

### ESG 3.4 Resources

<b>ESG Reference:</b> 3.4 Resources
<b>ENQA Criterion 3</b>
<b>Standard:</b> Agencies should have adequate and proportionate resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organize and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures <i>and staff</i> (Addition by ENQA for ENQA criterion)
<b>Guideline(s):</b>

<sup>50</sup> [http://www.mab.hu/joomla/images/doc/hac/regulations/Ftv2012\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.mab.hu/joomla/images/doc/hac/regulations/Ftv2012_Eng.pdf)



### (a) Evidence

HAC confronts the lack of resources, mentioned several times in SER, and also reflected in the budget, overviewed in subchapter 7.4. Financing, in SER, p. 28. The shortage of financial resources is the principal constraint. "It makes itself felt in a shortage of staff, down from 20.75 full-time equivalent positions in 2006, to the current 13.75."<sup>51</sup> Of the 16 staff members, 6 work as pensioners and 5 are employed part-time, some due to budget constraints.

The whole budget has considerably decreased since the 2008 Review. The State budget allocation has been reduced almost by half between 2009 and 2011. Then the situation has still been worsening in 2012 with a reduction by half.<sup>52</sup>

For 2013, the Ministry has announced that the budget is to be raised considerably compared to 2012, but this was still not effective at the time of the site visit and the budget for the current year was not yet clear. The relative part of own income, compared with the State allocation, in the HAC budget has increased from 20% in 2009 to 45% in 2012.

At the time of the visit HAC had nearly used all its reserves and had only sufficient funds to function for a few months more.

### (b) Analysis

Threatened by lack of certainty and confidence in funding sources, HAC continues its activity with determination. The reserves of the Agency are almost depleted, but still hope exists in the expectation that the budget will be raised compared to 2012, and the ministerial decree (in effect from March 16, 2013) in this way sustains its action.

International activities, with the exception of the ENQA forum and general assembly participation of the HAC President and General Secretary - are limited to those that are reimbursed by the inviting party.

The scarcity of resources of HAC makes long-term planning impossible. HAC has a strategic importance for the HE-sector in Hungary and the cost of running the agency is very low compared to the cost of the whole HE System in Hungary. Therefore funding should be sufficient and secure. Otherwise HAC's operational capabilities and position within Higher Education are undermined.

### (c) Conclusion

Partially compliant

### (d) Recommendation

The coherence between allocated resources and tasks should be negotiated with the Educational Authority. The Ministry has to budget and provide HAC with the necessary resources in due time in order to allow the Agency to plan and carry out its tasks.

## 4.4. ENQA Criterion 4 / ESG 3.5: Mission statement

### ESG 3.5 Mission Statement

<b>ESG Reference:</b> 3.5 Mission statement <b>ENQA Criterion 4</b>
<b>Standard:</b> Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement
<b>Guideline(s):</b> These statements should describe the goals and objectives of agencies' quality assurance processes, the division of labor with relevant stakeholders in higher education, especially the higher education institutions, and the cultural and historical context of their work. The statements should make clear that the external quality assurance process is a major activity of the agency and that there exists a systematic approach to achieving its goals and objectives. There should also be documentation to demonstrate how the statements are translated into a clear policy and management plan.

<sup>51</sup> SER of HAC, p. 28

<sup>52</sup> SER of HAC, p. 38



### **(a) Evidence**

"Based on its mandate set down in the Higher Education Act, Section 70, the HAC's mission is to contribute to advancing the quality of the social commitments of the Republic of Hungary as a member of the European Union and of the institutions of higher education and intellectual training that promote the welfare of its citizens, and to enhance the quality of their organizations, operation, expert groups and workshops.

The general aim of the HAC is to safeguard the quality of Hungarian higher education, to ensure its functioning in compliance with the requirements proclaimed in laws and legislative provisions, and to support the development of the quality of higher education."<sup>53</sup>

"Higher education institutions are tasked with setting up quality development programs within the scope of exercising their autonomy, in order to maintain and improve quality in higher education on the level of individual degree programs and institutional operation. The HAC supports their task by regularly evaluating them and formulating recommendations for them in the course of their accreditation procedure.

At the same time the HAC, in accordance with the law, also provides assistance to the government in steering higher education by contributing its expert conclusions for individual public-administrative decisions concerning quality and general educational policy concepts, and on new and amended draft legislation."<sup>54</sup>

HAC had an Action plan for 2010-2012 and has now a Strategic Plan for 2013-2015, to be found on the agency site: <http://www.mab.hu>. The map of the web page on the HAC site indicates links for:

- Regulations
  - ESG
    - Full English version
    - Hungarian version excerpt
  - Legislation
  - Basic documents
    - Articles of Incorporation
    - Strategy 2006
    - Strategy 2007-2009
    - Work Plan 2010-2012
    - Strategy 2013-2015
  - Procedural regulations
    - By-Laws
    - Procedure of the Financial Supervisory Committee
    - Code of Ethics

The content of the site shows a systematic approach to achieving its goals and objectives and also the division of labor with relevant stakeholders in higher education. The information on the site addresses the stakeholders, the higher education institutes and experts. The presentation of documents, along the period 2006-2013 (notably the mission statement included in the HAC's 2007, updated 2013 Quality Assurance document), shows a continuous and systematic approach of HAC activity.

### **(b) Analysis**

As presented in the evidence HAC has clear and explicit goals and objectives for its work, contained in a publicly available statement.

### **(c) Conclusion**

Fully compliant

### **(d) Recommendation**

None

<sup>53</sup> SER of HAC, p. 23, [http://www.mab.hu/joomla/doc/hac/publications/HACsQA\\_130225.doc](http://www.mab.hu/joomla/doc/hac/publications/HACsQA_130225.doc)

<sup>54</sup> The HAC's Quality Assurance, HAC resolution 2007/10/VI, updated 25 February 2013, p. 1, HACsQA\_130225.doc

## 4.5. ENQA Criterion 5 / ESG 3.6: Independence

### ESG 3.6 Independence

<b>ESG Reference:</b> 3.6 Independence <b>ENQA Criterion 5</b>
<b>Standard:</b> Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders
<b>Guideline(s):</b> An agency will need to demonstrate its independence through measures, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• its operational independence from higher education institutions and governments is guaranteed in official documentation (e.g. instruments of governance or legislative acts)</li><li>• the definition and operation of its procedures and methods, the nomination and appointment of external experts and the determination of the outcomes of its quality assurance processes are undertaken autonomously and independently from governments, higher education institutions, and organs of political influence</li><li>• while relevant stakeholders in higher education, particularly students/learners, are consulted in the course of quality assurance processes, the final outcomes of the quality assurance processes remain the responsibility of the agency.</li></ul>

#### (a) Evidence

The HAC operational independence was assured in the previous 2005 Higher Education Act which declared the HAC to be “an independent body of experts,” The new Higher Education Act does not formally mention this independence but the Government Decree (19/2012, II.22, §4(1)) specifies that the HAC is an independent organization.<sup>55</sup>

The HAC decisions are not directly influenced by the Ministry or any political entity. However the commitment of the Educational Authority not to override the HAC’s decisions was overturned with the case of consideration of the new VET programmes (42 of the applications were recommended by HAC to be refused and yet the Educational Authority overturned the recommendation and granted licenses in January 2013).

The question of resources was mentioned for ESG 3.4, putting the question of financial independence of HAC. The Government Decree (19/2012 II.22) regulates financing for the HAC, “stating in that it is a separate item in the budget of the Ministry. The *de facto* allocation in 2012 (less than half of what it has been in 2011) has seriously threatened the quality work and the independent existence of the HAC. It has been able to survive the year only by exhausting its financial reserves.”<sup>56</sup>

The Higher Education Act Section 71 (1) represents a significant change in HAC composition and designation rules: “The Hungarian Accreditation Committee shall be comprised of 18 members. The minister shall delegate 9 members, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences 2 members, the Hungarian Academy of Arts 1 member, the Hungarian Rectors’ Conference 3 members, religious legal entities maintaining higher education institutions 2 members, and the Association of Hungarian PhD. and DLA Students 1 member.”

The delegation of half the HAC members by the Minister, replaces a system with 19 members, dominated by academics, nominated by the HRC and by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

The nomination of the President by the Minister, instead of the precedent system of election by secret ballot among the members, is an additional concern in this context. This system is not unusual in Europe, but the President, as the members, can also be dismissed in the same form at any time without explanation, which diminishes the degree of independence of the Agency as compared with the preceding system from 1993 until 2011.

As far as independence from evaluated colleges and universities is concerned, the law prohibits rectors from being appointed to HAC membership, but most HAC members work at higher education institutions. HAC members are asked to sign no-conflict-of-interest

<sup>55</sup> SER of HAC, p. 39

<sup>56</sup> SER of HAC, p. 38

declarations on taking up their membership. The same is done for standing expert committee members.

External evaluators in ex ante procedures remain anonymous throughout the entire evaluation process; only the expert committee chair nominating them and the program officer in charge know their identity.

The “small country effect” makes decisions at risk of being occasionally tinged with institutional interests.

The Appeals Board for the HAC has three members who are delegated by the Minister and they have mandates for six years, once renewable. The Board of Appeals operates independently of the HAC and its members may participate in the public part of the HAC plenary meetings. They review cases in which the HAC is requested to issue a second opinion, based on the same standards and criteria that the HAC uses.<sup>57</sup>

### **(b) Analysis**

As compared with the preceding 2005 system, the new HAC organization is characterized by a significant loss of independence and scope of responsibilities. HAC is thus driven from an independent role into a more consultative role in the decision processes of the Educational Authority. Decisions and resolutions of HAC are in legal terms only expert opinions, requested and considered by the Educational Authority when making the licensing decisions. This situation is still undergoing further negotiations and HAC has proposed a number of amendments on the various points mentioned above that still may be improved.

The National Union of Students is invited to assist at the public part of HAC Plenary session, but has no member when the Plenary votes. They had this right before, but according to the New Higher Education Act they lost it, their place being overtaken by a representative of PhD students. HAC should involve both undergraduate and doctoral Students National Union of Students and Doctoral Students together, in the plenary sessions with full rights to vote. HAC has asked the Ministry to amend the Higher Education Act with respect to the role and membership of students in the HAC Plenary.

The Panel recognizes as a threat to independence the delegation of members by Minister, the fact that members can be recalled without explanation, and that the president is not elected by members but named by Minister – also mentioned in SER, at page 43.

### **(c) Conclusion**

Partially compliant

### **(d) Recommendation**

The Panel recommends HAC to persist in the present discussions with the Educational Authority about amendments and a clarification of the links and distribution of competences between Ministry of Human Resources – Educational Authority and HAC. It is important to ensure the independent status of HAC and to increase its stability and sustainability.

## **4.6. ENQA Criterion 6 / ESG 3.7: External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the members**

### ESG 3.7 External Quality Assurance Criteria and Processes used by Agency

**ESG Reference:** 3.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies

#### **ENQA Criterion 6**

**Standard:** The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process
- an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate,
  - (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency
- publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light

<sup>57</sup> SER of HAC, p. 26

of any recommendations contained in the report.

**Guideline(s):** Agencies may develop and use other processes and procedures for particular purposes.

Agencies should pay careful attention to their declared principles at all times, and ensure both that their requirements and processes are managed professionally and that their conclusions and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even though the decisions are formed by groups of different people.

Agencies that make formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences, should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of each agency.

### **(a) Evidence**

Based on the evidences described in the present report for:

- ESG 2.2 *Development of External Quality Assurance Processes*, at p. 19,
- ESG 2.4 *Processes Fit for Purpose*, at p. 23,
- ESG 2.6 *Follow-up Procedures*, at p. 26,

the requirements of ESG 3.7 External Quality Assurance Criteria and Processes used by Agency are generally respected. However, some issues regarding ex-ante programmes have already been mentioned in ESG 2.4.

"Ex ante procedures involve an application; external evaluation by two, in some cases three experts; discussion in the appropriate expert committees and the plenum and a resolution with the decision. The resolutions and decisions are published on the HAC website (TIR database)."<sup>58</sup>

"For ex post accreditation, the HAC proceeds along the standard procedures: the institution or program submits a self-evaluation report; visiting teams of HAC members and external experts, including a student, conduct site visits following the HAC's elaborated guidelines; the visiting teams produce reports which are discussed in the appropriate expert committees of the HAC (in case of program accreditation) and the HAC plenum, which passes a resolution with the decision. The final report, with analyses and recommendations for improvement, is published. The accreditation decision may specify a follow-up procedure with concrete measures that the institution or program should take, which will be checked by HAC at a specified deadline."<sup>59</sup>

Concerning ex-post and institutional evaluation: "Follow-up procedures involve required actions and/or action plans institutions or programs must carry out by a set deadline, which are reviewed by the HAC either in a report only or coupled with a monitoring site-visit. Another follow-up procedure is the follow-up meeting, held two years after the institutional accreditation procedure, for which the HAC invites representatives of the institutions evaluated together with person responsible for the institution's internal quality assurance to discuss the findings, outcomes and institutional follow-up measures in the procedure."<sup>60</sup>

### **(b) Analysis**

The Panel found an issue of concern with respect to appeals and the lack of certainty that all appeals are referred to the Appeals Board. There are distinct processes for appeals concerning applications from doctoral schools, HEIs and university professor applications.

"With doctoral schools, the Educational Authority is legally bound to abide by the HAC's decisions, but the institution may appeal directly to the Minister. If its appeal is successful it may grant operating licenses regardless of the HAC's decision."<sup>61</sup> The Minister is then not bound by the HAC's decision.

"With the new law, the Minister has thus the authority to overrule the HAC's opinion if the institution appeals the HAC's decision."<sup>62</sup>

The New Act establishes an Appeals Committee alongside the HAC having three members, delegated by the Minister and appointed by the Prime Minister.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>58</sup> SER of HAC, p. 26

<sup>59</sup> SER of HAC, p. 41

<sup>60</sup> SER of HAC, p. 41

<sup>61</sup> SER of HAC, p. 13, p.22

<sup>62</sup> SER of HAC, p. 32

<sup>63</sup> SER of HAC, p. 26

The university professor applications are submitted directly to the HAC and only appeals concerning these applications can be lodged directly with the HAC Appeals Board. On request of the Ministry to conduct an appeal procedure, the HAC Appeals Board issues an expert opinion on the application.<sup>64</sup>

All appeals concerning other types of complaints are to be made through the Educational Authority.

In cases where a HEI does not agree with the Educational Authority decision, it may lodge an appeal with the Minister, who has the power of decision.<sup>65</sup>

The Panel considers that the powers of HAC Appeals Board, with exception of appeals on university professor applications, are in practice very formal and limited.

### (c) Conclusion

Substantially compliant

### (d) Recommendation

The Panel considers that the participation of foreign experts and of external stakeholders might help in consolidating the Agency. Panel recommends HAC to involve foreign experts even when the financial resources of the Agency are limited.

The representation of students should also be increased. Their present representation only by a representative of the doctoral students is not sufficient, since they are usually considered in the EHEA as young researchers as much as students. The Panel recommends the designation of a representative of students, in addition to the representative of doctoral students. The students must be stakeholders with full rights to participate at HAC activities and decisions.

The Panel considers that it should be made much more explicit to all stakeholders what are and what are not the responsibilities of the Appeals Board and its position vis-a-vis the Educational Authority and Ministry of Human Resources.

## 4.7. ENQA Criterion 7 / ESG 3.8: Accountability procedures

### ESG 3.8 Accountability Procedures

<p><b>ESG Reference:</b> 3.8 Accountability procedures</p> <p><b>ENQA Criterion 7</b></p>
<p><b>Standard:</b> Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.</p>
<p><b>Guideline(s):</b> These procedures are expected to include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. A published policy for the assurance of the quality of the agency itself, made available on its website.</li> <li>ii. Documentation which demonstrates that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the agency’s processes and results reflect its mission and goals of quality assurance</li> <li>• the agency has in place, and enforces, a no-conflict-of-interest mechanism in the work of its external experts</li> <li>• the agency has reliable mechanisms that ensure the quality of any activities and material produced by subcontractors, if some or all of the elements in its quality assurance procedure are subcontracted to other parties</li> <li>• the agency has in place internal quality assurance procedures which include an internal feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from its own staff and council/Board); an internal reflection mechanism (i.e. means to react to internal and external recommendations for improvement); and an external feedback mechanism (i.e. means to collect feedback from experts and reviewed institutions for future development) in order to inform and underpin its own development and improvement.</li> </ul> </li> <li>iii. A mandatory cyclical external review of the agency’s activities at least once every five years <i>which includes a report on its conformity with the membership criteria of ENQA. (Addition by ENQA for ENQA criterion)</i></li> </ol>

### (a) Evidence

<sup>64</sup> SER of HAC, p. 17

<sup>65</sup> SER of HAC, p. 21

HAC has a published policy for the assurance of the quality of the agency itself, made available on its website. The web page structure contains:

- HAC quality
  - The HAC's internal quality assurance
  - "Clean" HAC page
  - External evaluation 1999/2000
    - The External evaluation of the HAC
  - External evaluation 2007/2008
    - The External evaluation of the HAC
    - Action Plan
    - Actions taken
    - Progress Report 2010
  - External feedback
  - Internal feedback

The documentation relating to the quality assurance system<sup>66</sup> includes:

- a) Quality assurance portfolio (*the up-to-date versions of the basic documents of the quality assurance system*)
  - Mission Statement
  - Quality policy
  - By-Laws
  - Code of Ethics
  - Assessment criteria
  - Rules of procedure of the Board of Appeals
  - Rules of procedure of the Financial Supervisory Board
  - Committee regulations set up on a case-by-case basis as necessary, regulatory resolutions
- b) The quality assurance system archive (*earlier versions of the basic documents of the quality assurance system*)
- c) Annual quality assurance folder
  - Reports and reviews on the HAC's operation
  - Surveys and analyses prepared that year
  - Feedback from advisory bodies
  - Informal feedback
  - Documentation on complaints and appeals

Additional documents important for the HAC's activity are: regulations, procedures and key resolutions on operation pertaining to the HAC (*Regulations portfolio*), HAC resolutions and related evidence (*resolutions in electronic format, minutes of meetings in electronic and paper formats*). Information on HAC website is updated regularly.

"The one clear statement that appears in the periodic surveys returned by evaluated institutions and by peer reviewers is the acknowledgement of the professionalism of the HAC and its staff in following and supporting the evaluation procedures."<sup>61</sup>

This view was confirmed during the site visit by a number of interlocutors.

HAC has implemented a no-conflict-of-interest mechanism in the work of its external experts. External evaluators are asked to sign a confidentiality clause in their contracts.

To avoid conflicts of interest in case-by-case decisions in the HAC, it issued a Code of Ethics in 2001. Moreover, the HAC has set up an Ethics Committee; only two cases were discussed over the past 12 years.

### **(b) Analysis**

The annual surveys from external stakeholders and the summaries of their results are going back to 2005, the surveys from internal stakeholders and the summaries of their results going back to 2003. As a rule, the HAC discusses the annual surveys in its plenary meetings

<sup>66</sup> The HAC's Quality Assurance, HAC resolution 2007/10/VI, updated 25 February 2013, p. 4, HACsQA\_130225.doc

and subsequently those points that are considered useful are worked into the Guidebooks and procedures when they are updated.

The results of the last survey that HAC conducted for the feedback from institutions evaluated in 2012 and their peer review team members was discussed at the HAC plenary meeting in December 2012.

Another round went to institutions whose programmes underwent disciplinary accreditation procedures in 2012 and to their review team members. These results were discussed in the HAC Plenary from February 2013.

A third set of survey went to the Hungarian Rectors' Conference, whose responses were also discussed at the February 1 plenary. They are posted on the HAC website.

The International Advisory Board<sup>67</sup> has annual meetings. Its resolutions and recommendations are loaded on the website and they are sent to the Ministry (State Secretary for Higher Education). At the annual meetings of International Advisory Board, the HAC presents the actions taken following the previous recommendations.

The Hungarian Advisory Board<sup>68</sup> consisting of major stakeholders and labor market representatives was first set up in 2002 and, after a pause, reestablished in 2012, with members from business and industry. The Hungarian Advisory Board is meeting at least once a year. Their feedback is to concern the impact of the HAC's work in the Hungarian employment market. HAC declares that "no formal recommendations have been issued".<sup>69</sup>

The Panel notes that the mandatory cyclical external review of the agency's activities at least once every five years is respected. The external review includes a report on its conformity with the membership criteria of ENQA (SER of HAC March 2013 chapter 8, "Self-evaluation of HAC compliance with ENQA membership criteria, including the ESG").

### (c) Conclusion

Fully compliant

### (d) Recommendation

The Panel recommends that HAC considers the results of the annual surveys from all types of stakeholders, for each year, for the elaboration of a system wide analysis over HAC activity, over a period of 5 years, until the next mandatory external review.

For the following external review of agency, in 2018, HAC should prepare an aggregated system-wide analysis reporting not only the dynamics and changes in opinions of stakeholders, but also the impact of its own activity on the development of higher education in Hungary in accordance with the economic situation of the country.

## 4.8. ENQA Criterion 8: Consistency of judgments, appeals system and contribution to ENQA aims

### ENQA Membership Criterion 8: Miscellaneous

<b>ENQA Criterion Reference: ENQA Criterion 8</b>
<b>ESG Reference:</b> N/A (Addition by ENQA for ENQA criterion)
<b>Standard/Guideline(s):</b> N/A (Addition by ENQA for ENQA criterion)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The agency pays careful attention to its declared principles at all times, and ensures both that its requirements and processes are managed professionally and that its judgments and decisions are reached in a consistent manner, even if the judgments are formed by different groups;</li> <li>ii. If the agency makes formal quality assurance decisions, or conclusions which have formal consequences, it should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of the agency;</li> <li>iii. The agency is willing to contribute actively to the aims of ENQA.</li> </ul>

<sup>67</sup> [http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=232:international-advisory-board&catid=80:hac&Itemid=644&lang=en](http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=232:international-advisory-board&catid=80:hac&Itemid=644&lang=en)

<sup>68</sup> [http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=233:hungarian-advisory-board&catid=80:hac&Itemid=645&lang=en](http://www.mab.hu/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=233:hungarian-advisory-board&catid=80:hac&Itemid=645&lang=en)

<sup>69</sup> SER of HAC, p. 44

### **(a) Evidence**

Concerning the consistency in judgments, in institutional and disciplinary ex-post program accreditation, with site visits, the written reports are detailed and extensive, containing recommendations for improvement and, in most cases, follow-up requirements (ESG 2.6).

HAC recognizes that "in the paper-based ex-ante evaluations there is a degree of inconsistency. Some evaluators elaborate their recommendation for the evaluation decision not in enough detail, thereby not providing enough explanation to support a decision. Two evaluators are always required and the expert committee chair may choose to invite a third one if the previous two evaluations differed substantially. The decision-making hierarchy allows for each higher-level body to override the earlier subcommittee's decision, though sometimes without sufficiently elaborating why the original decision was changed."<sup>70</sup> Voting rules set down in the by-Laws state that each decision-making level is not bound by the recommendation of the lower level if it has due reasons. Due reason means that the explanation for a reviewer's judgment contradicts the judgment itself, whereby the Plenum elaborates on the explanation in line with the judgment. In the institutional accreditation procedure there has been no case where HAC Plenary made a positive accreditation decision against a negative visiting committee recommendation, or a negative decision against a positive recommendation.

This system also contributes at present to consistency of judgments. However this issue could be addressed differently and more in line with present EHEA developments following the recommendation of the International Advisory Board, that HAC reconsider this tiered structure in favor of the international common practice to accept or reject evaluation reports by site visiting teams, or ask for revisions or clarifications in their reports, rather than to override them by committees decisions.

Concerning the appeals, "The legislation stipulates that appeals against the HAC's decisions may be lodged before the Educational Authority or the Minister, depending on the issue, who request the HAC's Board of Appeals to review the HAC decision. Based on its past practice and aware of international quality assurance standards, the HAC publishes its accreditation reports on its website, in addition to sending them to the evaluated institution."<sup>72</sup> See also ESG 3.7 above.

### **(b) Analysis**

HAC findings are public. The evaluated entity may formulate objections to the HAC findings in an appeals procedure. A Board of Appeals has existed since 2006. The newly set up Board of Appeals, which works independently from the HAC with a program officer trained in law, discusses the disputed evaluations. Until now the current Board of Appeals solved 16 appeals: 13 on university professor positions, 2 on new master programmes and 1 for a new bachelor program application. From all these appeals, 2 on university professorships were substantiated by the Board of Appeals between December 2012 and February 2013.<sup>71</sup>

As mentioned in the present report, subchapter 3.5 *The engagement of the agency with the ENQA membership provisions/ ESG* is to be seen not only in the context of HAC activity in accordance with ESG and ENQA criteria, but also in the active implications of HAC staff in bodies and actions, organized in the framework of European projects in the Higher Education European Area.

### **(c) Conclusion**

Fully compliant

### **(d) Recommendation**

None

<sup>70</sup> SER of HAC, p. 17

<sup>71</sup> SER of HAC, p. 44



## 5. Conclusion

In the light of the documentary and oral evidence considered, the Panel concludes the following:

- HAC is a well established and professional organization. However, since the last review, the context in which HAC operates has changed in ways that threaten HAC's ability to operate as an independent agency with sufficient resources to carry out its tasks within Higher Education in Hungary.
- It is especially problematic that the relevant laws governing HAC's operations and independence have been changed in ways that give the government more direct control of HAC. One serious example is the delegation by the Ministry of half of the HAC members and of the HAC President, then appointed by the Hungarian Prime Minister and that the appointments can be withdrawn immediately at any time without any explanations from the government.
- But the circumstances that create the current situation are due to the evolution of the legal and general context, and the new situation of the Agency within it, not to its own responsibilities.
- On the contrary, although being confronted with new difficulties and constraints, the Agency has tried to remain coherent with its tradition of commitment and its longstanding involvement in the building up of the EHEA. It has participated in this process since the beginning. It remains widely recognized by the HEIs and other stakeholders as a major actor of quality improvement of the Hungarian HE system.
- During the site visit, the Panel noticed the strong determination of HAC for continuing its activity with the same quality and commitment to standards as well as the real support of HEIs leaders, National Conference of Rectors and National Doctoral Council for supporting it.

ENQA Criterion / ESG Reference	Conclusions of the Panel for:
ENQA Criterion 1/ ESG 3.1: Part 2, ESG 3.3: Activities	FC
ENQA Criterion 2/ ESG 3.2: Official status	SC
ENQA Criterion 3/ ESG 3.4: Resources	PC
ENQA Criterion 4/ ESG 3.5: Mission statement	FC
ENQA Criterion 5/ ESG 3.6: Independence	PC
ENQA Criterion 6/ ESG 3.7: External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies	SC
ENQA Criterion 7/ ESG 3.8: Accountability procedures	FC
ENQA Criterion 8: Consistency of judgments, appeals system and contributions to aims of ENQA	FC

*FC (fully compliant), SC (substantially compliant), PC (partially compliant), NC (non compliant)*

Table 8. Final conclusions of the Panel members on HAC compliance with ENQA criteria

According with the *Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation* specified in the *Terms of Reference*<sup>72</sup>, the review panel is not expected to make any judgments as regards the reconfirmation of Full Membership". However it has noted that the level of compliance of HAC with several important ESG has clearly decreased since the last 2008 external Review.

<sup>72</sup> ToR, External review of the HAC by the ENQA, Annex I: TERMS OF REFERENCE (December 2012), p.1.

## 6. Annexes

### 6.1. External Review Panel working schedule

No	Date - 2013	Content	Name
1	21 <sup>st</sup> March	HAC self evaluation document circulated to all panel members for preliminary comments	ENQA Office
2	30 April	Deadline for submission to LD by individual panel members of first questions, remarks on the SER	ALL
3	22 April - 23 April	Chair and Secretary / planning meeting / draft schedule / interview rounds (mapping grid, indicating (preliminary) suggested headlines for further detailed enquiry and proposals for thematic lead on a particular topics in meeting	TM/ LD
3	27 April - 1 May	Draft schedule to HAC	LD
4	27 April - 3 May	LD summarize the Panel responses and re-circulate to Panel on 3 May	LD
5	2 May	ENQA telephone briefing: - Introduction, Purpose of the Reviews, Roles and Responsibilities and Interpretation of the ESG/ENQA membership criteria - Evidence and information, timeline and management of the site visit - Drafting of the report - Submission of the final review report and the decision-making process - Other issues related to the planning of the review	ALL
6	3 May – 26 May	Further Panel dialogue and fine-tuning by email, moderated by Chair	ALL
7	27 – 30 May	Site-Visit	ALL
8	27 May	Planning meeting to establish questions and topics on sessions, moderated by Chair	ALL
9	28 May (meetings from 8.00 onwards)	Site-Visit / Interviews / moderated by Chair	ALL
10	29 May (meetings from 8.00 onwards)	Site-Visit / Interviews / moderated by Chair	ALL
11	1 June – 24 June	First draft of report written by Panel Sec and sent to Panel Chair	LD/TM
11	25 June – 30 June	Draft signed official by Panel Chair by 30 June	TM
12	30 June	Amended draft circulated by LD to Panel members	LD
13	30 June - 5 July	Panel members submit comments to LD	ALL
14	5 to 14 July	TM and LD finalize report with Panel (based on comments and feedback)	TM/LD
15	14 July	Draft of evaluation report sent to HAC for factual corrections and CC to panel members	LD
16	28 July	Last date for receipt of factual corrections from HAC / Statement of HAC to review panel if necessary	HAC
17	28 July – 30 July	Report finalized by Chair and LD	TM/LD
18	August 2013	Final report sent to Panel members, to HAC and to ENQA secretariat.	LD/ TM
20	September 2013	Consideration of the report by ENQA and response of HAC	ENQA
21	September 2013	Publication of report and implementation plan	ENQA/ HAC

Table 9. Working schedule of External Review Panel

### 6.2. Indicative schedule of the review

The duration of the evaluation is scheduled in *Terms of Reference* to take about 10 months, from December 2012 to September 2013:

ACTION	FORSEEN in TOR	EFFECTIVE DATE
Self-evaluation starts	December 2012	
Agreement on terms of reference and protocol for review	December 2012	December 2012
Appointment of review panel members	January 2013	March 2013
Preparation of site visit schedule and indicative timetable	January 2013	
Self-evaluation completed	February 2013	March 2013
Briefing of review panel members	February 2013	May 2013
Review panel site visit	April 2013	May 2013
Draft of evaluation report to HAC	June 2013	June 2013
Statement of HAC to review panel if necessary	June 2013	July 2013
Submission of final report to ENQA	July 2013	August 2013
Consideration of the report by ENQA and response of HAC	September 2013	
Publication of report and implementation plan	September 2013	

Table 10. Indicative schedule of the review

### 6.3. Documents for evidence

No	Documents	Submission
1	Self-Evaluation Report HAC and Annexes	
2	HAC Strategy 2013-2015	
3	Additional information to SER pp18-20	29.05.2013
4	HAC activities	29.05.2013
5	Visit schedule_Final_29May	29.05.2013

Table 11. Documents for evidence at site visit

### 6.4. Program of the site visit

#### Site-visit program – ENQA External Review of HAC 27-29 May 2013

##### 27 May 2013

Time	Activity	Participants	Location
18.30 - 20.30	Initial preparation meeting for Review Team	Review Team	Hotel
20.30	Dinner	Review Team	hotel

##### 28 May 2013

Time	Activity	Participants	Location
8.00 - 8.15		Review panel	Meeting and going to HAC
8.15 - 8.30	Introduction and Welcome Review panel & HAC President, Staff	<i>Ervin Balazs</i> , HAC president <i>Tibor Szanto</i> , Secretary General <i>Eva Ruff</i> , Deputy Secretary General <i>Laszlo Gemesi</i> , Financial Director <i>Katalin Juhasz</i> , Head of Administration <i>Janos Spanyolik</i> , IT Program officers: <i>Marianna Batovszky</i> , <i>Mate Czilli</i> , <i>Zsofia David</i> , <i>Terezia Hernath</i> , <i>Szilvia Muhari</i> , <i>Judit Negyesi</i> , <i>Christina Rozsnyai</i> , <i>Andrea Szabo</i> Administrators: <i>Erika Bruckmann</i> , <i>Eva Halmai</i> , <i>Ibolya Vlad</i>	HAC Office
8.30 - 9.30	Session 1 / Interview HAC (Process and Management of the External Review) <b>S1-HAC</b>	<i>Ervin Balazs</i> , HAC President <i>Tibor Szanto</i> , Secretary General <i>Eva Ruff</i> , Deputy Secretary General <i>Laszlo Gemesi</i> , Financial Director <i>Christina Rozsnyai</i> , Program officer, foreign affairs	HAC Office
9.30 - 9.45	Short Break	Review panel	HAC – Office
9.45 - 10.45	Session 2 / Interview HAC Staff <b>S2-Staff</b>	<i>Katalin Juhasz</i> , Head of administration <i>Janos Spanyolik</i> , IT Program officers: <i>Marianna Batovszky</i> , <i>Mate Czilli</i> , <i>Zsofia David</i> , <i>Terezia Hernath</i> , <i>Szilvia Muhari</i> , <i>Judit Negyesi</i> , <i>Christina Rozsnyai</i> , <i>Andrea Szabo</i> Administrators: <i>Erika Bruckmann</i> , <i>Eva Halmai</i> , <i>Ibolya Vlad</i>	HAC – Office
10.45 - 11.00	Short Break	Review panel	HAC – Office
11.00 - 12.00	Session 3 / Interview HAC members who are chairs or representatives of Expert committees for disciplines <b>S3-experts</b>	<i>Andras Bojarszky</i> , National Union of Doctoral Students <i>Gabor Gerber</i> , Committee for Medical Education <i>Ferenc Gazdag</i> , Comm. for Social Sciences <i>Laszlo Koczy</i> , Engineering Committee <i>Janos Hebling</i> , Committee for Natural Sciences <i>Katalin E. Kiss</i> , Comm. for Humanities	HAC- Office
12.00 - 13.15	Sandwich lunch	Review panel	HAC – Office
13.15 - 13.30	Short Break (including preparation for up-coming sessions)	Review panel	HAC – Office
13.30 - 14.45	Session 4 / Interview experts	<i>Gabor Blasko</i> , Research Inst. "Servier"	HAC – Office

	involved in HAC procedures, Review Teams <b>S4-teams</b>	<i>Arpad Kovacs</i> , professor, Szeged University, Faculty of Economics, former President of State Audit Office <i>Mihaly Kranitz</i> , professor, Peter Pazmany Catholic Univ., Faculty of Theology <i>Jozsef Popp</i> , Research Institute for Agrarian Economics	
14.45 – 15.00	Short Break	Review panel	HAC – Office
15.00 – 16.00	Session 5 / Interview with students involved in HAC procedures, participated in recent HAC evaluations <b>S5-stu</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Union of Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>David Kiss</i>, Budapest Corvinus Univ.</li> <li><i>Peter Miklos Kömives</i>, Debrecen Univ.</li> <li><i>Peter Pausits</i>, Obuda University</li> <li><i>Imre Szabo</i>, Peter Pazmany Catholic University</li> </ul> </li> <li>National Union of PhD. and DLA Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Andras Bojarszky</i>, Peter Pazmany Catholic Univ.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	HAC – Office
16.00 – 17.00	Session 6 / Interview with National Doctoral Council <b>S6-NDC</b>	<i>György Bazsa</i> , prof. emer., Debrecen Univ., former head of National Doctoral Council, previous President of HAC <i>Jenő Bernath</i> , professor, Budapest Corvinus Univ. / National Doctoral Council	HAC – Office
17.00 – 17.15	Panel Break	Review panel	HAC – Office
17.15 – 18.00	Session 7 / Interview with leaders of HEIs + HEIp (rep. underwent HEI procedures on inst. and progr. level according to HAC regulations, Univ's; faculties; colleges – state and private sector) <b>S7-HEI</b>	<i>Jozsef Bayer</i> , rector, King Sigismund College <i>Nandor Birher</i> , professor, Veszprem College of Theology <i>Ferenc Friedler</i> , rector, Pannon Univ. <i>Istvan Gaal</i> , vice-rector, Debrecen Univ.	HAC – Office
18.00 – 18.15	Travel to MHR	Review panel	Travel
18.15 – 19.15	Session 8 / Interview with Ministry of Human Resources (MHR), and Educational Authority (EA) <b>S8-EA</b>	<i>Zoltan Maruzsa</i> , Deputy State Secretary for Higher Education, MHR <i>Laszlo Vasa</i> , Deputy Cabinet Chief to Mr. Maruzsa <i>Peter Princzinger</i> , President of EA <i>Csilla Steger</i> , Head of Department of HE at EA <i>Zsolt Fekete</i> , Deputy Head of HE Department at EA	Ministry of Human Resources 6 <sup>th</sup> floor Room 610
19.15 – 19.30	Back to the hotel	Review panel	Travel
19.30	Dinner	Review panel	hotel

## 29 May 2013

Time	Content	Participants	Location
8.00 – 8.15		Review panel	Hotel Lobby
8.15 – 8.30	Preparation for Review Team	Review panel	HAC Office
8.30 – 9.30	Session 9 / Interview with HAC Board of Appeals and Financial Supervisory Board <b>S9-BAFS</b>	<i>Andras Falus</i> , chair, Board of Appeals <i>Zoltan Racz</i> , member, Board of Appeals <i>Adam Török</i> , chair, Financial Supervisory Board	HAC Office
9.30 – 9.45	Short Break	Review panel	HAC – Office
9.45 – 10.45	Session 10 / Interview with Hungarian Rectors' Conference (HRC) <b>S10-HRC</b>	<i>Gabor Peceli</i> , rector, Budapest University of Technology and Economics <i>Laszlo Solti</i> , rector, Saint Stephen University, member of the Presidium of HRC <i>Szabolcs Szuromi</i> , rector, Peter Pazmany Catholic University, member of the Presidium of HRC	HAC – Office
10.45 – 11.00	Short Break	Review panel	HAC – Office
11.00 – 12.00	Session 11 / Interview with further stakeholders (Labour Market representatives / Chambers) <b>S11-SH</b>	<i>Janos Ginsztler</i> , President, Hungarian Academy of Engineers <i>Istvan Greiner</i> , Vice-Director for research, Gedeon Richter Plc. (Pharmaceutics) <i>Gabor Makara</i> , President of Supervisory Board of MTMT Hungarian Scientific Publications Database <i>Jozsef Mecsi</i> , member, Chamber of Engineers of Pest County	HAC – Office
12.00 – 13.15	Sandwich lunch	Review panel	HAC – Office
13.15 – 13.30	Short Break (including	Review panel	HAC – Office

	preparation for up-coming sessions)		
13.30 - 14.30	Session 12 / Interview with Other committees (College of University professorship and doctoral issues • Conflict of interest and ethics • Higher vocational education (VET) • Teacher training) <b>S12-OC</b>	<i>Akos Jobbagy</i> , Comm. for University Professorships and Doctoral Schools <i>Laszlo Korinek</i> , Ethics Committee <i>Melinda Kovacs</i> , VET Committee <i>Agnes Toth Köröspataki</i> , Teacher Training Committee	HAC – Office
14:30 - 16.00	Review panel meeting preparation for the final feedback and debriefing meeting	Review panel	HAC – Office
16.00 - 17.00	Final feedback session	<i>Ervin Balazs</i> , HAC President <i>Akos Jobbagy</i> , HAC member <i>Tibor Szanto</i> , Secretary General <i>Eva Ruff</i> , Deputy Secretary General <i>Laszlo Gemesi</i> , Financial Director <i>Mate Czilli</i> , program officer	HAC - Office
17.00 - 19.00	Closure of the Meeting	Review panel	
19.30	Dinner	Review panel	Restaurant

Table 12. Program during site-visit, 27-29 May 2013

Departure of panel members during of 30<sup>th</sup> May 2013

## 7. References

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